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A  
REVIEW  
OF  
DR. WARDLAW'S LECTURES  
ON THE  
ABRAHAMIC COVENANT;  
WITH  
TRACTS ON THE BAPTISMAL CONTROVERSY.

—  
BY ARCHIBALD MCLEAN,  
ONE OF THE PASTORS OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH, EDINBURGH.  
—

A New Edition,  
EDITED BY WILLIAM JONES.

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**REVIEW**

OF

**MR. WARDLAW'S LECTURES**

ON THE

**ABRAHAMIC COVENANT,**

AND ITS (SUPPOSED) CONNECTION WITH

**Infant Baptism.**

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REVIEWS

OF

MR. WASHINGTON'S LECTURES

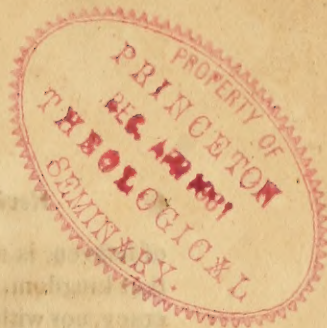
ON THE

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

AND ITS THEOLOGICAL CONNECTION WITH

THE OLD TESTAMENT





A  
**REVIEW**

OF

**MR. WARDLAW'S LECTURES**

ON THE

**ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.**



THOUGH I have not the pleasure of being personally acquainted with any of the teachers in the Tabernacle connection; yet I am happy to understand that they seem to be advancing in scriptural knowledge, and that they admit it as a principle, "That all Christians are bound to observe the universal and approved practices of the primitive Apostolic churches recorded in scripture."\* So far as they teach and practise these things, I do most sincerely wish them success; and if in any thing they are otherwise minded, it is my earnest prayer that God may reveal even this unto them. Meantime I cannot but observe with regret how much their views of divine truth are affected by their attachment to infant baptism, in support of which they are obliged to adopt such arguments and interpretations of scripture, as are not very consistent with their sentiments in other respects, when that point is out of view. God has, indeed, his elect among infants, as well as among adults; but to distinguish and baptize them as *visible* members of the kingdom

\* Mr. Haldane's View of Social Worship, p. 36.

of heaven, is neither consistent with the spirituality of that kingdom, as distinguished from the Jewish Theocracy, nor with its true visible appearance in the world, as in the days of the apostles.

I have perused Mr. WARDLAW'S three Lectures on Rom iv. 9—25. compared with Gal. iii. and find that his main design is to support infant baptism, and that too from two chapters where it is never once mentioned more than in any other part of scripture, nor does it appear in the least to have entered into the mind or view of the sacred writer. But he finds circumcision there, and the covenant made with Abraham respecting his seed; and from these, by a long train of ingenious reasoning, he deduces a warrant for baptizing the infant seed of New Testament believers.

Reasoners on this subject have often been reminded, that it is of such a nature as not to admit of reasoning. It is undeniable that Christian baptism is a *positive* institution, founded entirely in the will of the Instituter, and therefore cannot, like moral duties, be deduced or inferred from any other principle whatever but the Divine will, as made known, either by *express precept*, (which is its very institution,) or by the *approved example* of the inspired apostles who were commissioned to administer it. It is also plain, that baptism is a positive institution *peculiar to the New Testament*, and therefore cannot be deduced by analogical reasoning from any Old Testament institution, either as to its form, subjects, signification, or design. These things we must learn from the New Testament itself, to which alone this ordinance belongs, and in which alone we have any revelation about it. Therefore, in answering Pædobaptists, we are under no necessity to depart from the subject, and follow their reasonings back to



the xviith of Genesis, where there is not a syllable about baptism to be found. The Baptists, however, have never declined to meet them on that ground; and though the institution of circumcision is foreign to that of baptism, and differs essentially from it in many respects, yet it frequently leads to a discussion of the Abrahamic covenant, a subject of great importance, and well worthy of our consideration. As Mr. W. draws his arguments for infant baptism chiefly from that covenant, in order to judge of the propriety and conclusiveness of his reasoning, it will be necessary first to consider the nature of the covenant itself.

Men have given different views of that covenant. Some, both Baptists and Pœdobaptists, differ only in the mode of stating their view, while they agree in keeping clear the distinction between the Old and New Testament state of things; but others confound that distinction, except in a few circumstantial, and present us with a kind of semi-judaical system, which agrees neither with the old economy nor with the new. Some are of opinion that more covenants than one were made with Abraham, and produce express scripture for this; others think that these were only the different promises of the same covenant. Some consider this covenant as bearing two aspects; one towards Abraham's natural seed in respect of the temporal promises; the other towards his spiritual seed by faith, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, in respect of the spiritual promises; yet so connected, that the former aspect was typical of the latter: But others state it as their firm conviction, "That the promises contained in the Abrahamic covenant, both the *temporal* promise and the *spiritual*, were made to the *same seed*, on the *same footing*;" and so they make it to be purely and

altogether the same with what is commonly called *the covenant of grace*. Now this last is Mr. W's view of that covenant, p. 33, 43, 44. and also that of Mr. HALDANE\* and PHILALETHES, † though they differ in several particulars from each other.

Before I state my own view of the Abrahamic covenant, permit me to transcribe the opinion of two Pædobaptist writers, who seem to have paid a great deal of attention to that subject, viz. Dr. OWEN and Mr. JOHN GLAS. The words of Dr. OWEN are, "Two privileges did God grant unto Abraham, upon his separation to a special interest in the old promise and covenant.

1st, That, according to the flesh, he should be the *father of the Messiah*, the promised Seed, who was the very life of the covenant, the fountain and cause of all the blessings contained in it. That this privilege was temporary, the thing itself doth demonstrate.

"2dly, Together with this, he had also another privilege granted unto him, namely, That *his faith*, whereby he was personally interested in the covenant, should be *the pattern of the faith of the church* in all generations; and that none should ever come to be a member of it, or a sharer in its blessings, but by the same faith that he had fixed on the Seed that was in the promise, to be brought forth from him in the world. On the account of this privilege, he became the father of all them that do believe: For they that are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham, Gal. iii. 7. Rom. iv. 11. and thus he became heir of of the world, ver. 13. in that all that should believe throughout the world, being thereby implanted into

\* View of Social Worship, Sect. vii. p. 313—341.

† Edin. Evang. Mag. vol. 3. p. 129—136.



the covenant made with him, should become his spiritual children."

"Answerable to this twofold end of the separation of Abraham, there was a double seed allotted unto him. A seed according to the *flesh*, separated to the bringing forth of the Messiah, according to the flesh, and a seed according to the *promise*; that is, such as by faith should have interest in the promise, or all the elect of God. Multitudes afterwards were of the carnal seed of Abraham, and of the number of the people separated to bring forth the Messiah in the flesh; and yet were not of the seed according to the promise, nor interested in the spiritual blessings of the covenant, because they did not personally believe as our apostle declares, Heb. iv. And many afterwards who were not of the carnal seed of Abraham, nor interested in the privilege of bringing forth the Messiah in the flesh, were yet designed to be made his spiritual seed by faith, that in them he might become *heir of the world*, and all nations of the earth be blessed in him."

"Now it is evident, that it is the second privilege and spiritual seed, wherein the church, to whom the promises are made, is founded, and whereof it doth consist; namely, in them who by faith are interested in the covenant of Abraham, whether they be of the carnal seed or no. And herein lay the great mistake of the Jews of old, wherein they are followed by their posterity unto this day. They thought no more was needful to interest them in the covenant of Abraham, but that they were *his seed* according to the flesh; and they constantly pleaded the latter privilege, as the ground and reason of the former."

"It is true, they were the children of Abraham

according to the flesh ; but, on that account, they can have no other privilege than Abraham had in the flesh himself: and this was, as we have showed, that he should be set apart as a special channel, through whose loins God would derive the promised Seed into the world. The former carnal privilege of Abraham and his posterity expired on the grounds before mentioned, [having answered its end], the ordinances of worship which were suited thereunto, did necessarily cease also. And this cast the Jews into great perplexities, and proved the last trial that God made of them. For whereas both these, namely, the carnal and spiritual privileges of Abraham's covenant, had been carried on together in a mixed way for many generations, coming now to be separated, and a trial to be made who of the Jews had interest in both, who in one only ; those who had only the carnal privilege of being children of Abraham according to the flesh, contended for a share, on that single account, in the other also ; that is, in all the promises annexed to the covenant. But the foundation of their plea was taken away, and the church unto which the promises belong, remained with them that were heirs of Abraham's faith only. The church unto whom all the [spiritual] promises belong, are only those who are heirs of Abraham's faith ; believing as he did, and thereby interested in his covenant\*."

Now, if Abraham's fleshly seed had no other privilege in common by that covenant but what was carnal and temporary, and which has accordingly expired and reached its end in the coming of the Messiah in the flesh—and if none, even of Abraham's

\* Exercitat. on Epist. to Heb. vol. 1. p. 53, 56, 57.



fleshly seed, were partakers of the spiritual privileges of that covenant, but only such of them as were heirs of his faith, and believed as he did—then, it may be asked, upon what ground are all the fleshly seed of New Testament believers considered as partakers of the spiritual privileges of that covenant, and upon that presumption, baptized in infancy without any appearance of their faith?

The following are Mr. GLAS'S sentiments of the Abrahamic covenant:

“God called Abraham, of the seed of Shem, and gave him the promise of Christ, and separated him and his seed, Isaac and Jacob, and the children of Israel, from the nations, till Christ the promised Seed should come of him.

“We must carefully consider the promise made to Abraham; for now the revelation of Christ the Seed became more clear, and the distinction betwixt the Old Testament and the New must be understood in a great measure by the due understanding of this.

“It must be agreed among Christians, that own the authority of the New Testament, that Christ is that Seed promised to Abraham, *in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed*, Gen. xii. 3. ch. xxii. 18. compare Gal. iii. 6. So that here the gospel is preached before unto Abraham, Gal. iii. 8. By the *nations* in this promise, we cannot understand all and every one in the nations; nor can we consider them as such political bodies of men in the earth; but, according to the New Testament explication, it is “a great multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,” Rev. vii. 9. and v. 9.—This will be evident, if we consider, that the blessedness spoken of in this promise is *spiritual* and *eternal*—Gal. iii. 8, 9, 14.

“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then, they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham—That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” It is manifest no nation of this world can, in a national capacity, be the subject of justification by faith; and of the promise of the Spirit which we receive through faith.—

“Thus far, then, God’s promise to Abraham was spiritual and eternal. And here lay the object of that faith whereby Abraham was justified and eternally saved; even as his spiritual seed of all nations are blessed with him, in the faith of the same thing that was then to be found in the promise, but now in the accomplishment of that promise, as is declared in the gospel.

“Yet there was something in this promise peculiar to Abraham, and not common to him with all believers; and that was, that Christ should come of his seed, Gal. iii. 16. Heb. ii. 16. That this might be evidently fulfilled, it was necessary that Abraham’s seed according to the flesh, of whom Christ was to come, should be preserved distinct from other people, till the promised Seed, Christ, should come of them. And of this, which was peculiar to Abraham in the promise of Christ, there came another promise, which we may see Gen. xii. 2. 7. *I will make of thee a great nation.—Unto thy seed will I give this land.* See likewise Gen. xiii. 14, 15. chap. xv. from ver. 13. It is evident that this promise was *temporal*, as the other is spiritual and eternal, and fell to be accomplished before that



other. And this temporal promise was given as a pledge of the accomplishment of the eternal promise, and carried in it a type, or earthly pattern, of the heavenly things of that promise. For the land of Canaan, promised as an inheritance to his seed according to the flesh, was a type of the heavenly inheritance: and so Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob took it to be, Heb. xi. 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16. And the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, that became a nation, and inherited Canaan's land, was evidently a type of Abraham's spiritual seed of all nations, the heavenly nation that inherits the heavenly country. And the difference betwixt these two was typified by Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, and Isaac, the son of the free-woman, in Abraham's family, Gal. iv. 21—31.

“ This twofold promise laid the foundation of a twofold relation to God; the one *spiritual* and *eternal*, betwixt God and them that believed the *spiritual* promise, and all the children of Abraham according to the Spirit, in all the nations of the earth: The other *earthly* and *temporal*, betwixt God and the seed of Abraham according to the flesh; which it behoved so far to continue till Christ came, as the end designed by it required. Of both these God speaks to Abraham, Gen. xvii. when he gives him the covenant of circumcision, to be kept by him, and his seed after him, in their generations. This circumcision was a sign of Christ's being to come of Abraham's seed according to the flesh; and it represented the shedding of the blood of that promised Seed, and the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, and was a seal of the righteousness of faith *to them that believed in the Seed to come*: so that, by the nature of it, it fell to be done away by the coming of that promised seed: and there-

fore it belonged to the *temporal promise*, and the *temporal relation* betwixt God and Abraham's seed according to the flesh, as that promise and relation was subservient, and had a reference unto the eternal promise, and the relation arising therefrom. And thus God made the covenant of circumcision with Abraham, to be a God unto him, and to his seed after him, in their generations, (Gen. xvii. 7.—11, &c.) by this means separating Abraham and his seed, that were to be a nation, and inherit Canaan, to be a peculiar people to him above all people, and enclosing the promise of Christ among this circumcised people, till that promised Seed should come.

“When the Lord proceeded to fulfil the *temporal promise* made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to make their seed a nation, and give them the promised land, he did it by means of a covenant, even that which he made with them *when he took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt* by the mediation of Moses, Exod. xix. 3.—8. This is called the *old covenant*, Heb. viii. 13. on account of the temporal relation between the Lord and that nation, which is [now] done away. It is also called the *law*, Gal. iii. 17. Heb. x. 1. because of the law therein given to the nation of Israel; and the *first testament*, Heb. ix. 15. on account of the typical adoption, and the temporal inheritance, which was first given before the promise of the eternal inheritance was fulfilled. And when he proceeded in the fulness of time, to fulfil that great *spiritual and eternal promise*, of blessing all nations in Christ, he did it by means of another covenant, even that which he made by the mediation of Jesus Christ with Abraham's spiritual seed of all nations, redeemed from spiritual bondage and the wrath to come, by the



blood of the Lamb, the true only and heavenly nation. This is called the *new covenant*, Heb. viii. because of the new spiritual and eternal relation betwixt God and this new nation, made up of all the nations of the earth. And it is called the *new testament*, on account of the true adoption, Gal. iv. 1—7. and the eternal inheritance therein given to as many of all nations as the Lord calls, now when the first inheritance is done away, Heb. ix. 15. This is the *better covenant*; as much better, as the *sure promises* of spiritual and eternal blessedness to all nations in heavenly places in Christ, upon which it is established, are better than the promises of temporal blessings in earthly places to the nation of Israel, upon which that first covenant was established; as much better, as the *whole people* within the bond of this covenant, whose sins God remembers no more, who all of them know him, and in whose hearts his law is written, that they may never depart from him, are better than that covenanted nation, which continued not in that same covenant whereby it was related to God, and was cast off by him;—and as much better, as the *blood of the Son of God* sealing this covenant, is better than the blood of beasts dedicating the first; and as his *mediation* is better than the mediation of Moses. And these are the two covenants or testaments of which the apostle speaks, Gal. iv. Heb. viii. and ix. He calls them *two covenants*; and so they are indeed, as much distinct as heaven and earth are; and shows plainly, that all the covenanted in that first covenant were not saved, yea, that none were saved but by faith in the promises of Christ, upon which the new covenant is established.”\*

\* Glas's Works, vol. 1. p. 50.—56, second edit.

This statement is much the same with the former, only he takes notice of circumcision, and having explained its mystical or typical import, he considers it as belonging to the *temporal promise*, and the *temporal relation* betwixt God and Abraham's seed according to the flesh, as that promise and relation was subservient, and had a reference to the eternal promise, and the relation arising from it; and so, by its very nature, fell to be *done away* by the coming of the promised Seed. Thus he classes *circumcision* in the flesh made by hands with the rest of the carnal typical institutions, and views the *promise* to which it belonged as of the same temporal nature with the old covenant at Sinai, which was evidently founded on, and connected with, that promise, and in which God declares himself to be related to the whole nation of Israel as their God. And with regard to circumcision being termed *a seal of the righteousness of the faith*, he restricts that to Abraham, and *to them that believed in the Seed to come* as he did; for so the apostle himself, (who alone uses that expression, and must have best known his own meaning) expressly does, Rom. iv. 11, 12. And indeed, without this restriction, the apostle's reasoning would be not only altogether inconclusive, but inconsistent, as shall afterwards be shown.

Now if the foregoing view of the covenant of circumcision be scriptural, it does not afford the least ground for baptizing the infant seed of New Testament believers, but very much the contrary: For here we see, that the covenant of circumcision was peculiar to Abraham's fleshly seed, of whom Christ was to come according to the flesh; that it was of a temporal and typical nature, and accordingly has long ago been done



away, with circumcision itself, which was the token of it in their flesh, together with the Sinai covenant which was founded on it, and all the typical and ceremonial institutions pertaining to it. So that the only covenant which corresponds with the gospel state of things is the new and better covenant, which was intimated in the original promise made to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. typified by the old covenant, and expressly mentioned and promised in Jer. xxxi. 31—35. but did not actually take place till Christ came; for it was made through his mediation, and ratified in his blood, or by his death, Matth. xxvi. 28. Heb. ix. 15—18. Now the people who are related to God by this new covenant are described in the better promises on which it is established, as having his law written in their hearts, as all knowing him from the least to the greatest of them, and as having their sins and iniquities forgiven, Heb. viii. 10.—13. None have any interest in the spiritual blessings of this covenant, by being either the fleshly seed of believing Abraham, or the fleshly seed of believing Gentiles. Here no man is known or acknowledged after the flesh; but only as being the spiritual seed of Abraham, and that only by faith in Christ Jesus, 2 Cor. v. 16, 17. Gal. iii. 7, 9, 26, 29. “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love, or a new creature, Gal. v. 6. chap. iv. 15. Therefore to acknowledge any as *visible subjects* of this covenant upon the ground of the covenant of circumcision, or indeed upon any other ground whatever, short of the scriptural evidence of their personal faith in Christ, is mere presumption, and of dangerous consequence. Further, as baptism belongs to the new covenant, so it cannot be lawfully administered to

any, be their parents what they may, who do not appear to be the subjects of this covenant by the profession of their faith in Christ, as the whole account of it in the New Testament, both with regard to its institution and administration, clearly demonstrates.

I do not in the main differ from the state which the forementioned writers have given of the Abrahamic covenant; but shall only observe, that they seem to view all the promises, both spiritual and temporal, which were made to Abraham, first and last, as only different promises and renewals of one and the same covenant, though they admit that it involved in it two very different future covenants, the old and the new; and in this light I have treated the subject in my 7th Letter to Mr. Glas. Yet as the scriptures speak of more covenants than one being made with Abraham, I think it safest to give place to the express language of scripture.

I know no difference between a simple promise and a promissory covenant, but only this, that the latter was usually confirmed by sacrifice, an oath, or some other solemn ratification, which gave it a covenant form. Now the original promise made to Abraham, recorded in Gen. xii. 3. and which was four hundred and thirty years before the law, is termed by the apostle, "the COVENANT that was confirmed before of God in Christ," Gal. iii. 17. and this was afterwards renewed and confirmed by an oath, Gen. xxii. 18. Heb. vi. 13—18. The promise in this covenant is, "In thee shall all nations be blessed;" which the apostle explains, entirely in a spiritual sense, as being the gospel which was preached before to Abraham respecting God's design of justifying the heathen through faith, Gal. iii. 8. and upon this view of it he grounds his argument through-

out the rest of that chapter. About eight years after this original transaction, God made a covenant with Abraham respecting the inheritance of the land of Canaan. He had promised it to him and his seed before, but now he puts his promise into the form of a covenant ratified upon sacrifice, Gen. xv. 9, 10, 17, and so it is said, "In that same day the Lord made a COVENANT with Abraham, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river the river Euphrates," ver. 18. see also Psal. cv. 8—12. About sixteen years after this, God gave him the COVENANT of circumcision (as it is termed, Acts vii. 8.) in which he renewed the promises of multiplying his seed, of giving them the land of Canaan, and of being a God to him and to his seed after him in their generations, and, as a token of this covenant in their flesh, he commanded that every man-child among them should be circumcised, Gen. xvii. 4—15.

Thus we may see that there were different covenants made with Abraham, and so the apostle speaks of them in the plural number, calling them the *covenants*, Rom. ix. 4. the *covenants* of promise, Eph. ii. 12. The first contained the promise of spiritual blessings in Christ to Abraham's spiritual seed of *all nations*, Jews and Gentiles, as the apostle explains it at large. The other two contained temporal promises to Abraham's fleshly seed, which were literally fulfilled to the nation of Israel, served to keep them distinct from all other nations till Christ should come of them, and at the same time were types and pledges of spiritual blessings to the faithful among them.

Having thus stated my view of the original covenant made with Abraham, and of the covenant of circumcision which was made with him and his seed about



twenty-four years after, I proceed now to make some observations on Mr. WARDLAW'S Lectures.

On Rom. iv. 11. he observes, "That circumcision is here represented, first, as a *sign*, and, secondly, as a *seal*. A *sign* is that which *represents*; a *seal* that which *confirms, assures, or pledges*." With regard to the first, he says, "It was a sign of the spiritual blessings bestowed in justification—The taking away of sin both in its guilt and in its pollution, or justification and sanctification; the circumcision of the heart; the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh." And he also thinks that circumcision was *probably* intended as a sign, that the seed in whom all nations were to be blessed, should come from the loins of Abraham." P. 8, 9, 10.

It is admitted that circumcision, as well as all the other carnal and typical institutions of the Old Testament, had a *spiritual* or *mystical* meaning, which applied to all the spiritual seed of Abraham, even as it had also a *plain* and *literal* meaning as applicable to all his fleshly seed. But this affords no argument for infant baptism; for baptism has not a twofold meaning like circumcision, a letter and a spirit, but it is a sign of spiritual blessings only, and therefore belongs to none but those who appear to be the spiritual seed of Abraham by faith.

He next considers of what circumcision is here said to be, a *seal*. "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised." But he does not think that it was to Abraham the seal of his own *personal justification*, or that it is the manner of God to seal thus to any their personal acceptance. This he imagines would be inconsistent with the future trials of his faith, and his inheriting the promises through

faith and patience—and with the exhortation given to Christians to give diligence to make their calling and election sure; and that therefore it was not properly a seal of Abraham's faith and acceptance, but of justification, being by the faith of Abraham. P. 11, 12.

Here I think Mr. W. is in a very great mistake. Abraham's receiving circumcision as a seal of his own personal faith and acceptance, was certainly very consistent with the future trials of his faith and patience, and tended to support him under these trials. Paul speaks of believers as having the Spirit as the earnest of the inheritance, and of their being sealed unto the day of redemption, Eph. i. 13, 14. ch. iv. 30. had they therefore no more to do with trials of faith and patience? Peter represents Christians as rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory, while they were actually exercised with manifold trials of faith and patience, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7, 8. And why did he exhort them to give diligence to make their calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10. if no such certainty was attainable in this life, or if he thought such attainment inconsistent with their future trials of faith and patience?

Do trials of faith consist chiefly in doubts about a man's state? If circumcision was not a seal to Abraham of his personal faith and acceptance, how could it be a "seal to him of justification being by *the faith of Abraham*; or that uncircumcised Gentiles would be justified by the *like faith*?" The truth is, it was a seal to him of his own personal justification by faith, and consequently of the justification of all who should afterwards *believe as he did*, Rom. iv. 23, 24. But this does not prove that it was such a seal to all his natural seed, nor indeed to any of them at eight days old.

He puts the question, "What was circumcision to those who followed Abraham in the observance of it? What was it to his seed?" and answers, "That, *as a sign*, it could never change its meaning while it continued in practice. What a sign is fitted to represent *at first*, it is fitted from its nature always to represent." P. 13.

This is nothing to the purpose. The question is, What was its meaning as administered to Abraham's natural posterity? In answer to this he says, "It denoted the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh—the circumcision of the heart—that separation to God which takes place when faith was counted for righteousness—and the coming of Christ from the loins of Abraham." P. 13.

Here he gives us its mystical or typical sense, which is realized only in Abraham's spiritual seed, and is applied to New Testament believers; but does not say, what it was to all Abraham's natural posterity indiscriminately as such. If it was a sign to them only of spiritual blessings, it must have been a mere empty sign to the most of them of what they neither discerned nor possessed. And if it was fitted from its nature *always* to represent only the spiritual blessings of the gospel, as its literal and plain import, how came it to be set aside? nay, how came the apostle to represent it as of the most pernicious consequences to the Gentile converts, declaring, that if they were circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing; and that it made them debtors to do the whole law? Gal. v. 2, 3, 4.

It should be particularly observed, that circumcision had both a *letter* and a *spirit*, *i. e.* a *literal* and a *mystical* meaning, as all the other typical institutions had. The Lord promised to Abraham, that in



him, or in his Seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed, Gen. xii. 3. which promise he confirmed with an oath, Gen. xxii. 18. This is that covenant to which the apostle so often refers, and says it was confirmed of God in Christ 430 years before the law, Gal. iii. 17.\* But besides this, God afterwards made another covenant with Abraham in a subserviency to the former, wherein he promised to multiply Abraham's seed, to give them the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and to be their God, Gen. xvii. 6—9. To this covenant, which was literally with Abraham's natural seed, he annexed the sign of circumcision: "And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations—and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant." Ver. 11, 12, 13. Here we see that circumcision was an indelible

\* The covenant referred to, being 430 years before the giving of the law, must be that gospel promise made to Abram, Gen. xii. 3. when he was 75 years of old, ver. 4.

	Years
From thence to the birth of Isaac, when he was an hundred, Gen. xxi. 5, is .....	25
From thence to the birth of Jacob, when Isaac was threescore, Gen. xxv. 26, is .....	60
From thence to Jacob's going into Egypt, when he was 130, Gen. xlvii. 9, is .....	130
From thence to Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, and the giving of the law, is .....	215
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So that the whole time of their sojourning in Egypt and in the land of Canaan, according to the Seventy, (Exod. xii. 40.) makes .....	430

mark in the flesh of all Abraham's natural seed, particularly in the line of Isaac and Jacob, and it must have signified to them what was literally imported in the promises to which it was annexed. It was the token of God's covenant whereby they were separated from the rest of mankind to be a peculiar people to himself, and by which he stood related to them as their God in the same sense as he declared himself the God of the whole nation of Israel; and it also signified their being heirs of the earthly inheritance of the land of Canaan, and of its temporal blessings, which was made over to them by that covenant. This was the original and literal meaning of circumcision, as it belonged to the natural posterity of Abraham.

But then both circumcision and the temporal promises to which it was annexed, had also a mystical or typical sense. As the children of the flesh are not, as such, the real children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed, Rom. ix. 8. so "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision," *i. e.* the true circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God," chap. ii. 28, 29. Outward circumcision in the flesh of Abraham's natural seed, was only a type of the circumcision of the heart of his spiritual seed, or of that "circumcision which is made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ," Col. ii. 11. And so New Testament believers are termed *the circumcision* who worship God in the Spirit, &c. Philip. iii. 3. The true seed of Abraham are only "they who are

of faith," Gal. iii. 7.—The earthly inheritance of the land of Canaan was a type of the heavenly country, Heb. xi. 10, 16.—and the temporal relation in which God stood to the fleshly seed of Abraham by the covenant of circumcision, and afterwards by the covenant at Sinai, and which is now done away, was a type of the spiritual and eternal relation in which he stands, by the new covenant, to all the children of Abraham by faith, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, Gal. iii. 26, 29.

Thus we see that circumcision, and what pertained to it, had both a *letter* and a *spirit*, or a *literal sense* in relation to the fleshly seed of Abraham, and a *mystical* or typical sense in reference to his spiritual seed. Much confusion and inconclusive reasoning has been introduced on this subject from not properly distinguishing these things.

He observes, "That circumcision retained the nature of a *seal* of the righteousness of faith, to all who were not of the circumcision only, but also walked in the steps of Abraham's faith." P. 13.

Granting this, it makes nothing for infant baptism, but very much against it, unless he could show, that circumcision retained the nature of a seal of righteousness to all Abraham's natural posterity, whether they walked in the steps of his faith or not. The apostle, however, does not say, that circumcision was a seal of righteousness in its universal application to Abraham's infant seed; but only that Abraham himself "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of all them that BELIEVE in uncircumcision," i. e. of all believing Gentiles, "that



righteousness might be imputed to them also ; and the father of the circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had in uncircumcision." *i. e.* That he might be a father to such of his circumcised seed only as imitate his faith. The design of the apostle is to exclude both circumcision and the works of the law (which he joins together on this subject) from having any influence on justification ; and therefore, having shown that Abraham was justified by faith exclusive of works, ver. 2—6. he proceeds here to show, that it was exclusive of circumcision also, because he was justified before he was circumcised, ver. 10. and he received circumcision afterwards, not to contribute to his justification, but as a seal that he was justified by faith while in uncircumcision. If circumcision retained the nature of a seal of the righteousness of faith to others besides Abraham, it could be such a seal to those only who, like him, *believed* ; and Mr. W. has not yet ventured to affirm that it was a seal of righteousness to any but believers.

To show that circumcision retained the nature of a seal of righteousness, he instances in " Isaac and Jacob, Abraham's immediate successors in the faith, in the line from which Messiah was to spring," and asks, " What was circumcision to them ?" And having observed that they were heirs with Abraham of the same promises, Heb. xi. 9. and that the promises made to Abraham were expressly repeated by God to them, Gen. xxvi. 1—5. chap. xxviii. 10. he proceeds thus, " Now I hardly think any one will say, that while circumcision was to Abraham a seal of the righteousness of faith, it was to Isaac and Jacob, these heirs

with him of the same promises, a mere mark of their carnal descent from Abraham, and of their heirship of temporal blessings. Was it not to them a seal or pledge of the faithfulness of God to that promise of which they were fellow-heirs with their father? that is, a seal of spiritual blessings, which is the same, in effect, as a seal of the righteousness of faith—I cannot think it was less.” P. 13, 14.

Isaac and Jacob were heirs with Abraham both of the temporal and spiritual promises. Of the *former* they were heirs *by birth* as the seed of Abraham, for these were stipulated to Abraham and his seed after him.—Of the *latter* they became heirs *by faith* in the promised Seed, and so had righteousness imputed to them as Abraham had. But why single out Isaac and Jacob from among the rest of Abraham’s circumcised seed? Is it because they are a proper specimen of the whole? I hardly think he will maintain this. Or is it to show, that circumcision was something to them at eight days old which it was not to others? If so, then it may be asked, what was circumcision to the *whole* of Abraham’s seed to whom it was indiscriminately administered? It is certain that the covenant of circumcision had no regard to any distinction of character among Abraham’s natural seed, nor was it possible that it should, because circumcision was to be administered at eight days old. Circumcision therefore belonged to them all alike by their birth as descendants of Abraham; for thus the covenant runs, “This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; EVERY MAN-CHILD among you shall be circumcised.—And he that is EIGHT DAYS OLD shall be circumcised among you, EVERY MAN-CHILD in your generations,” Gen. xvii. 10, 12.

Here it is plain, that every male-infant, descended from Abraham, had as good a right to circumcision by the divine command as either Isaac or Jacob had in infancy. Circumcision in its *letter*, or proper and literal sense, was the very same thing to Isaac and Jacob, in infancy, that it was to all the infant-seed of Abraham. It was to the whole of them (as has been shown) a sign of their separation and relation to God as his typical people, by an external covenant of which it was a token in their flesh, and of their being heirs of the earthly inheritance and its temporal blessings. And with regard to spirituals, their chief advantage was, that unto them were committed the oracles of God, Rom. iii. 2. which contained the revelation of his will, and intimations of good things to come. Isaac and Jacob were doubtless heirs of spiritual blessings; but not by virtue of the covenant of circumcision, or by being of the circumcision only, which was common to them with all the natural posterity of Abraham; but only through the righteousness of faith, manifested by their walking in the steps of that faith of their father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised, Rom. iv. 12, 13. for it is only they who are of faith that are the children of Abraham, and are blessed with faithful Abraham, in the sense of the gospel promise made to him, Gal. iii. 7, 8, 9.

Mr. W. having affirmed that circumcision was to Isaac and Jacob a seal of spiritual blessings, he adds, "Yet if it was so, we have here a seal of spiritual blessings administered by divine command to infants of eight days old. And this certainly shows that there is no absurdity in the thing itself, and no absurdity in the idea of circumcision being a seal to all who should *afterwards* believe, of the righteousness of



faith, or of the same blessings which it sealed originally; for what may be in one case may be in ten thousand." P. 14.

Here he takes it for granted, that circumcision "was a seal of the righteousness of faith at eight days old to all who should *afterwards* believe." But the scripture says no such thing. It informs us, that Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; but it no where says that infants of eight days old received it as a seal of their future faith and acceptance. Mr. W. says, that "a seal is that which *confirms, assures, or pledges,*" p. 8. and does he really believe that circumcision confirmed, assured or pledged, that all the infants to whom it was administered would afterwards believe and be justified? If it be said, that it sealed the righteousness of faith to them, if they should *afterwards* believe, this is only to say, that when administered it was no seal of righteousness to them, nor till they actually believed, which, it is likely, might never take place: and can we term this a divine seal of spiritual blessings as administered to infants of eight days old? In the law of circumcision there is no restriction of it to those infants who should afterwards believe; for had it been so restricted it could have been administered to none in infancy, because such were known to God only. As therefore the covenant of circumcision makes no distinction among the male-infants of Abraham's posterity, nor any difference as to what it signified to some more than to others, it must have been the same thing, whatever that was, to Isaac and Jacob in infancy that it was to all the rest, and to affirm the contrary is mere assertion without the least

foundation. Those of them who *afterwards believed*, and so became the spiritual seed of Abraham, were possessed of the righteousness of faith, and the circumcision of the heart made without hands, and so had the spirit of circumcision; but this could not be anticipated and sealed to them by any outward sign in infancy, it being then a profound secret in the mind and sovereign purpose of God. Hence it appears, that outward circumcision in the flesh must have had a literal signification, which applied equally to all the male-infants of Abraham's seed, whether they should afterwards become real believers or not. The great body of the circumcised nation of Israel were a carnal people, uncircumcised in heart and ears; yet circumcision was not misapplied when administered to them in infancy, but was according to the express command of God.

He thinks there is nothing in the circumcision of infants that unfits it for being a seal of the righteousness of faith, which would not equally unfit it for being a seal of temporal blessings. P. 15.

This would be true, if the righteousness of faith devolved upon us as heirs to our natural parents. If an earthly inheritance is by a deed conveyed to a man and his seed after him in their generations, his children have a right to it by birth, according to the tenor of the deed; and by that same birth they are known to be heirs, and so may have a token or seal of heirship (circumcision for instance) impressed upon them in infancy as well as at any after period. Here its fitness is obvious, because it is a token or seal of a truth, or existing title. But if faith, or a second birth, be necessary to the enjoyment of spiritual blessings, then it is plain that circumcision could not seal the righteous-

ness of faith to any of Abraham's seed in infancy, nor even when adults, except to such of them as believed as he did. It is only they who be of faith that are blessed with faithful Abraham. Indeed, we no where find circumcision termed a seal of the righteousness of the faith of any but that of Abraham, and that as father of the faithful; and to suppose that circumcision was administered by divine authority to the whole of Abraham's natural seed, as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which they had, would certainly be a very great absurdity.

Hitherto he has been giving us his sense of the first clause of verse 11. "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised;" and now proceeds to the words following, viz. "that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also; and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had being yet uncircumcised." To illustrate these words he observes,

"1. That Abraham on his being *justified by faith*, was constituted the father, in a spiritual sense, of all among mankind, both of his natural descendants and of the Gentiles, who, to the end of time, should be justified in the same way."

"2. Abraham's being justified *when in uncircumcision*, denoted that he should have part of his spiritual family from among the uncircumcised Gentiles: that he was to be the father of *all them that believe*, though not circumcised."

In both these observations he has exactly hit the



sense of the apostle, and is perfectly right. Only, in the second observation, he might have added, that Abraham's being justified in uncircumcision, denoted also, that none of his natural descendants were justified by circumcision, which enters also into the apostle's design. But as neither of these observations comes up to the point he has chiefly in view, therefore he adds,

"3. When Abraham received the sign and seal of circumcision, he then became, according to the appellation, the father of circumcision. Now observe particularly to what description of persons he is represented as holding this relation—to *them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of his faith.*" And he thinks, "words could hardly intimate more plainly, that circumcision was a seal of this covenant, not merely as to the temporal part of it, but also as to the spiritual. For surely it must have been of the same import to the *children of circumcision* as it was to the *father of circumcision.*" P. 16, I7.

He admits that Abraham is here spoken of as a spiritual father to a believing or spiritual family; and he bids us "observe particularly to what description of persons he is represented as holding this relation—to *them who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of his faith.*" In this he is certainly right; for the apostle, in this passage, is speaking only of Abraham's spiritual seed. But he seems to forget that this is the Baptist's argument, and is not aware that this concession (for so I must call it) overthrows at once all the arguments for infant baptism drawn from the covenant of circumcision; unless he means to affirm, in express contradiction both to the apostle and himself, That all who were included in that covenant,

even those who were of the circumcision *only*, were Abraham's believing or spiritual family; and from that again to infer, that all the fleshly seed of New Testament believers are also Abraham's believing or spiritual family, as being included in that same covenant. I know that to state the matter shortly in this plain manner would startle some of the most zealous Independent Pœdobaptists; but as it is really the point to which all their arguments tend, and in which they must issue, if they come to any conclusion at all, they ought fairly to state and avow it, instead of involving the subject in so many ingenious and intricate reasonings, (in which they frequently both affirm and deny the same thing) which are the sure marks of an untenable cause when the question relates to a positive divine institution. But I must attend to his argument.

Abraham is here termed "the father of circumcision to them who walk in the steps of his faith." This, he says, "plainly intimates, that circumcision was a seal of this covenant, not merely as to the temporal part of it, but as to the spiritual. For surely it must have been of the same import to the *children of circumcision* as it was to the *father of circumcision*." In answer to this let it be observed,

1. That the covenant of circumcision made no distinction whatever among the natural seed of Abraham. All of them without exception, or distinction of character, were included in that covenant; and, being all circumcised, may be termed the *children of circumcision*; yet Mr. W. will not affirm, that circumcision was of the same import to them all as it was to their father Abraham; for if so, they must all have received it as a seal of the righteousness of their faith.

2. Abraham is here called *the father of circumci-*

sion, not as being the father either of the covenant or rite of circumcision, for these were the immediate appointments of God, but as being the spiritual father of his *believing* circumcised offspring, who, in common with the nation of Israel are denominated *the circumcision* ;\* but distinguished from the bulk of that circumcised nation, by their being not of the circumcision only, but also by their walking in the steps of Abraham's faith.

3. The whole drift of the apostle's argument in this passage is to show, that none were ever justified or saved either by the covenant of circumcision or the works of the law, but by faith only. To evince this, he shows that Abraham was justified by faith long before he was circumcised, and that he received the sign of circumcision only as a seal of this : That none of his circumcised seed were justified, or had Abraham to their father in a spiritual sense, by virtue of their circumcision ; but only by believing as he did, or walking in the steps of that faith of their father Abraham, which he had, being yet uncircumcised. And as to Gentiles, who never had any thing to do with the covenant of circumcision, he shows, that Abraham is the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised ; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also, as it was to him. It is therefore evident to a demonstration, that the whole of the apostle's reasoning, particularly from ver. 9, to 17. goes to deny that either circumcision or the works of the law gave any title whatever to justification, or the heavenly inheritance, to the circumcised Jew more than the uncir-

\* Though περιτομή wants the article in this place, as it does also in chap. iii. 30. yet it ought to have been translated *the circumcision* here as well as there.



uncircumcised Gentile ; and to show that it is only *by faith* that either of them come to be the spiritual children of Abraham, and to be blessed with him. And the promise of this blessedness he traces back, not to the peculiar covenant of circumcision, but to the original promise made to Abraham, the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, which was 24 years before the covenant of circumcision, and 430 years before the giving of the law. See Gal. iii. 8, 9, 16, 17. Circumcision was indeed very much insisted on by the Judaizing teachers in the apostolic age, but the apostle has sufficiently refuted all their pleas for it. It therefore appears very strange to me that uncircumcised Gentile believers, who never were under the peculiar covenant of circumcision, and were forbidden to come under it, should still strenuously plead it as an argument for administering the new covenant ordinance of baptism to their infant seed, though expressly restricted to believers.

He says, " It will, I dare say, be admitted, that they only can with any propriety be denominated *the circumcision* in whom the import of the rite is fulfilled." P. 17.

This will be either admitted or denied according to the sense in which we understand *the import of the rite*, which is an ambiguous expression when applied to a rite which had both a literal and mystical import, as has been shown. I suppose, however, that he means to affirm, that none could with *any propriety* be denominated *the circumcision* who were not inwardly circumcised in heart. But this will not be admitted ; for the whole circumcised nation of the Jews are frequently denominated *the circumcision*, to distinguish them from the Gentiles. Thus Christ is said to be the min-

ister of *the circumcision*, i. e. of the Jews among whom he exercised his personal ministry, Rom. xv. 8. To Peter was committed the gospel of *the circumcision*—the apostleship of *the circumcision*—and it was agreed that James and he should go unto *the circumcision*, and Paul and Barnabas unto *the heathen*. Gal. ii. 7, 8, 9. Here *the circumcision* simply means the Jews without any reference to the circumcision of the heart, but merely as nationally distinguished from the heathen. Again, believing Jews are denominated *of the circumcision*, not because they were circumcised in heart, but to distinguish them as Jews even from believing Gentiles, see Acts x. 45. ch. xi. 2. Col. iv. 11. nay, they are said to be not of *the circumcision only*, Rom. iv. 12. to distinguish them from such Jews as were *only of the circumcision*, and so not the spiritual children of Abraham by faith. Since therefore the Jews are repeatedly denominated *the circumcision* by the sacred writers, it certainly must have been with *great propriety*, whether the bulk of them were believers or not; nay it is the first, the literal and only proper sense of that appellation. And though believers in Christ, whether circumcised or not, are once termed *the circumcision*, Philip. iii. 3. yet it is in a secondary or mystical sense, not from the nature of the thing, but by a figure borrowed from circumcision in the flesh.

Further, he says, “They who, though descended from Abraham, wanted his faith, are not allowed the honourable appellation of *the circumcision*, but degraded and proscribed under that of *the concision*.”

We have just seen, however, that they were not only allowed the appellation of *the circumcision*, but that it was repeatedly given to them both by Paul and Luke; not because they had Abraham's faith, but because they were his circumcised offspring, to whom that distin-

guishing appellation literally applied as a national characteristic. And if Paul degraded and proscribed the Jewish zealots from the honourable appellation of *the circumcision*, how came he afterwards to bestow that supposed honour upon those whom he describes as unruly, vain-talkers and deceivers, who subvert whole houses? Tit. i. 10, 11. The whole nation of Israel were *the circumcision*, and a type of the true Israel; among these there were a number who were not of the circumcision *only*, but were also of the faith of Abraham, circumcised in heart, and so were blessed with faithful Abraham as his spiritual children. And I agree with him "that the *true circumcision* or the *true Israel* have in every age been the same," though greatly differing in their degrees of light and spiritual privileges.

Having followed him through the argumentative part of his first Lecture, I would now ask, What is the amount of all his reasonings on ver. 11, 12? Has he shown that there was nothing of a *temporal* or *typical* nature in the covenant of circumcision, as it respected and included all the fleshly seed of Abraham, but that it is still in force under the gospel? or has he made it appear that there was nothing peculiar to the Jews in it, but what equally applies at this day to the fleshly seed of New Testament believers? With regard to the spiritual sense of circumcision, has he proved that it was a *seal of the righteousness of faith* to any of Abraham's natural seed but believers; or even to them previous to their believing? or has he shown that Abraham was a spiritual father to any of them but those who walked in the steps of his faith? No; he has not as yet explicitly and directly avowed these particulars; yet upon any other principles his arguments come to no conclusion as to the point at issue.



He begins his second Lecture with ver. 13. "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Here he takes notice of three things—The promise—The seed to whom it is made—and the ground on which it rests. With regard to the promise that he should be the heir of the world, he observes,

"1. That it must be understood in a sense not entirely peculiar to Abraham, but made to Abraham and his seed."

True, Abraham's believing seed are included in this promise; but still there was something peculiar to Abraham in it, to whom it was promised, that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed, Gen. xii. 3. and that he should be a father of many nations, Gen. xvii. 4, 5. that is, of believers throughout the whole world. Yet this distinguished honour conferred upon Abraham was with a view to Christ, who was to come of his seed, be constituted heir of all things, and in whom, not in Abraham personally, all nations were to be blessed, Gen. xxii. 18. As to the nature and extent of the promise, he says,

"2. I agree with those who consider this promise as of a very extensive import, as including the possession of Canaan—the possession of the whole earth—and the final possession of the heavenly country itself." P. 26.

The promise that Abraham should be *the heir of the world* is of the same import with his being made *the father of many nations*, ver. 17. or with *all nations* being blessed in him, or in his Seed, the Messiah, Gal. iii. 8. It should be kept in view that the apostle is here, as well as in Gal. iii. establishing the doctrine of

free justification by faith independent of circumcision or the works of the law; that he adduces the justification of Abraham himself as an instance of the way in which God justifies all the believing world of Jews and Gentiles, that *whole world* for whose sins Christ is the propitiation, 1 John ii. 2. And he shows that this promise of being heir of the world, "was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith—"to that seed which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all," Rom. iv. 13, 16. It is plain, therefore, that he is speaking of a promise made to Abraham and his spiritual seed, and to them only. Now, if we enquire what kind of blessings are promised to all this seed, and bestowed upon them exclusively, the same apostle informs us, that they are "all *spiritual blessings* in heavenly places (or things) in Christ," Eph. i. 3. such as *justification*, Rom. iv. 23, 24. Gal. iii. 8, 9—the promise of the *Spirit*, Gal. iii. 14.—the *adoption* of sons, verse 26. chap. iv. 5, 6.—and the heavenly *inheritance*, Gal. iii. 18. Heb. ix. 17, chap. xi. 10, 16. These are all included in the blessing of Abraham. If therefore the promise under consideration respects spiritual blessings, which belong exclusively to the spiritual seed of Abraham by faith, as appears from the scope of the whole passage, I cannot think that it intends the earthly temporal inheritance of the land of Canaan; for though that was also promised to Abraham's seed, and was a type of the heavenly inheritance, yet it was not peculiar to the spiritual seed, but common to them with the rest of his natural posterity who were of the circumcision only; nor was it ever promised to, or bestowed on the Gentile part of his spiritual seed, as was the blessing of Abraham; but it is expressly said of the promise we are

now speaking of, that "it is *of faith* that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be *sure to all the seed*: not to that only which is of the law," (i. e. believing Jews), "but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all," both believing Jews and Gentiles, verse 16.

Nor do I think that this promise signifies, that Abraham and his spiritual seed shall have the possession of *the whole earth*, or that the land of Canaan was a prelude of this: For though after the destruction of the beast and false prophet, and the binding of Satan, we are given to expect a more extensive spread of the gospel and its effects in advancing the kingdom of Christ in this world, Rev. xx. 4, 6. yet unless we understand this of a literal resurrection of the saints from the dead, and their taking possession of the whole earth, (a sentiment inconsistent with many passages of scripture), this promise could not respect any of Abraham's spiritual seed, but such of them as shall live on the earth at that period; whereas the promise made to Abraham, as has been observed, is of faith, and by grace, that it might be *sure to all the seed*, which I think must import, that it will be infallibly accomplished to the whole of Abraham's spiritual seed, and not merely to that part of them who inherited the land of Canaan, or that shall personally enjoy the blessings of the millennial period.

Mr. W. seems aware of this objection to his scheme, and endeavours to obviate it, by distinguishing between a *right* and *actual possession*. P. 28, 29. But what is the benefit of a *right* when there is never any *actual possession*? He thinks the promise of "the possession of the whole earth must be understood of the seed *collectively* considered," and for this cites Psal. lxi. 6. 1 Thess. iv. 15. 1 Cor. xv. 51. and he might also



have cited Rev. v. 10. to show that by a certain mode of speech men frequently apply that to themselves which applies only to another part of the collective body to which they belong; and from this he concludes, "So we may with *perfect propriety* say, that the promise spoken of, in the view I am now taking of it, is *to us*, because it shall be verified to the seed of which we are a part." P. 30.

I admit the mode of speech referred to in certain cases, but not as applicable to the spiritual promise made to Abraham; for that is expressly declared to be *sure to all the seed*: not as being verified to some of the collective body, but to every individual of the spiritual seed; for a promise can with *no propriety* be said to be *sure to all*, which is verified only *to a part*.

He observes in general, "That all the seed have the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." This is certainly true; but he knows that they may possess the life that now is, though they should never possess the land of Canaan, nor the *much higher degree of temporal enjoyments* which, he supposes, will be enjoyed by those who live in this world during the millennium; nay, though they should, like their Lord and his first followers, suffer many privations of earthly comforts. He will surely admit, that godliness with contentment is great gain; that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses, and that a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.

As to the *life to come*, he says, "All being finally put in possession of the heavenly country, may be said then to inherit the promises in their full extent, this being their grand sum, their glorious completion."

To this I heartily subscribe; for this promise is sure

to all the spiritual seed, who by faith and patience during the life that now is, are seeking and desiring that better country, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did. He admits that "Moses and Aaron inherited the promises, although they were sentenced to finish their course short of the earthly Canaan;" and he might have added, that all the saints who have died in the faith, from the beginning of the world to this day, inherit the promises, though they have been appointed to finish their course short of inheriting the whole earth during the millennium.

The promise to Abraham has been accomplishing more or less in all ages of the church, and that as really, though not so extensively, as when God at the first did visit the nations to take out of them a people for his name, or, as we have ground to expect, when the kingdoms of this world shall become our Lord's and his Christ's, Rev. xi. 15. But whatever change we may then suppose will take place as to the prosperity, extent, outward peace, and other circumstances of Christ's kingdom in this world, I have no idea that it will change its spiritual nature, or become a kingdom of this world, any more than it was in the days of the apostles; nor can I see how such a change would be very desirable to a spiritual mind.

He next proceeds to consider the *seed* to whom the promise is made, and for this he directs us to Gal. iii. 16. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made: he saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." On this he observes, "that the name *Christ* is sometimes used as inclusive of his people, the head being intended to express the whole body connected with it," and for this he produces one instance, viz. 1 Cor. xii. 12.

for as to Gal. iii. 29. it is not to the purpose. I know that several learned commentators give the same sense of the name *Christ* in ver. 16. that he does, understanding it not of Christ *personally*, but *mystically* considered, as including all the believing seed, and that in this sense they are not *many*, but *one kind* of seed.

But though it is true that the seed who make up Christ's mystical body are not *many*, but *one kind* of seed, viz. believers; yet, with all due deference to the judgment and learning of these commentators, I humbly conceive that they have mistaken the meaning of the name *Christ* in this passage, and have imposed a sense upon it very different from what the apostle means to convey, viz. That the *seed* of Abraham to whom the promises had a primary respect, is spoken of not as MANY, but as ONE individual person, and that this person is CHRIST. This is not only the plain sense of the words, but agrees best with the scope of the whole passage, which is to convince the Galatians, that no sinner can be justified or obtain the inheritance by the works of the law, ver. 10, 11, 12, 22. but only by the faith of Christ, the Seed of Abraham in whom all nations were to be blessed, ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.

The apostle grounds his argument on the original promise made to Abraham, which, as it was 430 years before the giving of the law, ver. 17. must be that which is recorded Gen. xii. 3. and I suppose it will be admitted, that the words *in thee* are equivalent to *in thy Seed*, as it is afterwards expressed, Gen. xxii. 18. Nor can it be denied that this *Seed* is Christ, and no other; for in whom else but in Christ alone could all nations of the earth be blessed? Besides, this promise and oath is said to be performed when the God of Israel raised up an horn of salvation for them in the



house of his servant David, Luke i. 69, 72, 73. and when, having raised up his Son Jesus, he sent him to bless them, in turning away every one of them from his iniquities, Acts iii. 25, 26. This will further appear if we consider, *how* the blessing of Abraham comes to the nations in his seed, which is explained thus; "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith," Gal. iii. 13, 14. Further, the apostle represents the original promise as a covenant which was unalterably ratified (*εις Χριστον*) *to, in, or with a view to Christ*; and therefore could not be disannulled or rendered ineffectual by the law which was afterwards given to the nation of Israel: "And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise," ver. 17, 18. Again, in answer to the question, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" he says, "It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made," &c. ver. 19. The *Seed that should come* evidently means Christ; and if so, we are here expressly told, that *to him* the promise was made. It was to this *one* Seed of Abraham, as distinguished from the *many*, or from *all the nations* that were to be blessed in him, that the promise of the inheritance was made; though it was made to him as representing them, for they are blessed in him.

Mr. W. having stated his view of the *extent* of the promise made to Abraham that he should be the heir of the world, which he understands of the land of Canaan, the whole earth, and the heavenly country ; and having also given his view of the *seed* to whom the promises here intended were made, which, though spoken of as *one*, and explained by the apostle to be *Christ*, he understands in a collective sense, as signifying *one kind* of seed, or Christ's mystical body, he proceeds thus :

“ From these passages, I now state it as my *firm conviction*, that the promises contained in the Abrahamic covenant, both the *temporal* promise and the *spiritual*, were made to the *same seed*, on the *same footing*. That they were both made to the *same seed*, seems to be as plain as a positive declaration from an inspired apostle can make it: To Abraham and his seed were the promises made—These are here *expressly* said to have been made to the *same seed*.” P. 33.

I own I am at a loss to understand what he means by saying, that “ both the *temporal* promise and the *spiritual* were made to the *same seed*, on the same footing.” The *spiritual* seed of Abraham among his natural posterity were not, as such, the *same seed* with the mere children of the flesh ; yet they enjoyed the temporal promise in common. The apostle says, that “ unto Abraham and his seed were the promises made ;” but he at the same time explains that seed to be Christ, as has been shown.

Some, from this and other passages, state it as their firm conviction, that the promise even of the temporal inheritance of the land of Canaan was made in the first instance to Christ the Son of God, and as he was to spring from the nation of Israel according to the

flesh; so that nation, by virtue of their fleshly relation to him, inherited it in his right, as the typical children of God and joint-heirs of it with him. They also argue this from its being termed the *holy-land*, Hag. ii. 12. as being consecrated to God, who therefore claims it as his peculiar property, calling it *my land*. Lev. xxv. 23. 2 Chron. vii. 20. Isa. xiv. 25. Jer. ii. 7. chap. xvi. 18. and from its being expressly termed, *thy land O Immanuel*, Isa. viii. 8. a name peculiar to Christ, who was to be born of a virgin, chap. vii. 14. Matth. i. 23. But whatever be in this, if Mr. W. by the *same seed*, means only Abraham's *spiritual seed*, then it is not true that the promise of the temporal inheritance was made to them as such; for as no such distinction of the seed is mentioned in that promise, so we know that in fact the possession of it was not restricted to the spiritual part of Abraham's natural posterity, but was common to them with the rest of the nation of Israel; and I am persuaded he will not venture to affirm, that the whole nation of Israel, nor even the bulk of them in their successive generations, were the spiritual seed of Abraham either in reality or appearance. And with respect to his spiritual seed among the Gentiles, the promise of this inheritance was never made to them, nor did they ever possess it.

He says, "There is not the smallest hint given of the distinction so often contended for, that the temporal promise was made to the *fleshly seed as such*, and the spiritual promise to the *spiritual seed as such*. No such distinction is to be found in Paul's reasoning. But the promises of the covenant without difference are declared to have been made not to *seeds* as of many, but as of *one*—And to thy seed, which is Christ." P. 33.



The Baptists indeed do often contend for a distinction in Abraham's natural posterity, between the children of the flesh and the children of the promise. They also distinguish temporal from spiritual promises; and they affirm, that the former belonged to all his natural posterity without difference; but that the latter belonged only to his spiritual seed: And does Mr. W. mean to deny that there is the smallest hint given of such distinctions in Paul's reasoning? I cannot allow myself to think that this is his meaning, because it would contradict many passages in his Lectures which seem to admit these distinctions; but yet I cannot find out any other sense to his words. Does he mean that none of Abraham's *mere fleshly seed* were included in the covenant of circumcision? If so, then he must also maintain, that the whole nation of Israel were Abraham's spiritual seed; for it is certain that they were all expressly commanded to be circumcised as the token of God's covenant in their flesh; and the uncircumcised man-child is threatened with being cut off from among God's people, as having broken his covenant, Gen. xvii. 14. which shows, that all the circumcised seed had an interest in the covenant of circumcision. But it is clear, that the apostle, throughout the passages under consideration, constantly distinguishes the spiritual seed of Abraham from the rest of his circumcised seed by their being *not of the circumcision only*, but who *also walk in the steps of Abraham's faith*,—believe on him that justifieth the ungodly—all them that *believe*—the seed which is *of the faith* of Abraham—who *believe* on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Rom. iv. 5, 11, 12, 16, 24. And in his Epistle to the Galatians, he distinguishes them as they *which be of*

*faith*—the just *who live by faith*—who are the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus— heirs *according to the promise*—not children of the bond-woman, *but of the free*, Gal. iii. 7, 9, 11, 26, 29. chap. iv. 31. With respect to the *promises*, though the scripture does not distinguish them by the words *temporal* and *spiritual*; yet the nature of the things promised sufficiently distinguish them. Thus we know that the promise of the land of Canaan, and of the good things of it, was a *temporal* promise, and that justification, the promise of the Spirit, the adoption of sons, and the eternal inheritance, are all of a spiritual nature, and so included in the *spiritual promise*. Now, when we say, that the temporal promise was made to Abraham's fleshly seed, *as such*, we mean, that it respected his natural offspring in common, or without distinction; for had it been restricted to the spiritual part of his natural seed, it would not have been accomplished to the whole nation of Israel, as we see it actually was: And if any should affirm, that the whole nation, or even the bulk of them, were his spiritual seed, such are not to be reasoned with. Again, when we say, that the spiritual promise was made to Abraham's spiritual seed, *as such*, we mean, that it did not respect them merely as his natural seed, but *as believers*; nor was it restricted to believers among his natural seed, but extended also to Gentile believers, who were the natural seed of heathen idolaters, but became the children of God and the spiritual seed of Abraham by faith in Christ Jesus, and so heirs according to the promise, Gal. iii. 26, 28, 29. But as Mr. W. seems to deny that there is the smallest hint of such a distinction in all Paul's reasoning, I shall, in addition to what

I have already observed, show, both from Paul's reasoning, and other passages of scripture, the grounds we have for holding the important distinction between Abraham's natural and spiritual seed, and between the temporal and spiritual promises made to them.

John the Baptist had his mission to the natural posterity of Abraham, who were in actual possession of the temporal promise of the land of Canaan. He baptized with the baptism of *repentance*, "saying unto the people, That they should *believe* on him that should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." Acts xix. 4. But as many of them imagined, that they were secured from the wrath to come, and entitled to the favour of God on account of their being the descendants of Abraham, he repels all their claims upon that ground, saying, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham." Mat. iii. 9. Here we see that the natural seed of Abraham who, according to the covenant made with him, were circumcised, and enjoyed the temporal promise, had no right, on these accounts, either to baptism or the spiritual blessings signified by it; and therefore, to obtain an interest in these spiritual blessings, they were called to that *faith* and *repentance* by which men become the spiritual seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise. And it deserves serious consideration, whether the present plea for the baptism of infants, founded on their being the children of believing parents, and their supposed interest in the covenant of circumcision, be indeed equally well founded as the old exploded Jewish boast of having believing Abraham to their father, and of their being circumcised in the flesh ac-



according to the literal binding terms of that peculiar covenant. If the natural posterity of Abraham, that illustrious patriarch, were not, as such, interested in the covenant of grace by virtue of the promise, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee," it must be vain and presumptuous in Christian parents to imagine, that *their* children are included in the covenant on account of that promise.

It is said of Christ, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 11—14. The Jews, the natural seed of Abraham, were Christ's *own* nation and people. They were peculiarly favoured above all other nations with many distinguished privileges. "To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; and of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." Rom. ix. 4, 5. But notwithstanding these external national privileges, the great body of them did not receive Christ when he came unto them, but rejected him; and so were not the spiritual seed of Abraham by faith, but were his seed only as being born of blood, of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, and, as such, had no title to the spiritual promises contained in the blessing of Abraham. From these the spiritual seed are distinguished by their *receiving* Christ, or *believing* in his name, and by their being *born of God*, and obtaining the dignified privilege of being his *sons*. This is that second birth of which our Lord speaks to Nicodemus, and concerning which he de-

clares that, without it, no man can enter into the kingdom of God, John iii. 3—9. It comes not by natural generation from believers, no not from believing Abraham himself; nor did the covenant of circumcision entail it upon his natural seed; for it is a fact, that the bulk of his natural seed were rejected, while the seed of heathens became the true seed of Abraham and the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, Rom. ix. 26, 30, 31. Gal. iii. 26, 29.

Paul expresses his great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart, on account of the unbelief and rejection of the bulk of the Jewish nation, who were Israelites, his kinsmen and brethren according to the flesh; but lest any, from this awful event, should take occasion to impeach the faithfulness of God, or imagine that the promise which he made to Abraham and his seed had fallen to the ground, or failed of its accomplishment, he proceeds to evince the contrary, by distinguishing the children of the flesh from the children of the promise; and he shows that this distinction was typically intimated both in the family of Abraham and of Isaac: "Not as though the word of God had taken none effect: For they are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed," Rom. ix. 6, 7, 8. And he illustrates this distinction by what took place in the family of Abraham. Ishmael was his first-born by Hagar; yet the promise did not respect him, but was restricted to Isaac, Sarah's son; "For this is the word of promise—At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son," ver. 9. and the same restric-

tion was intimated in the promise, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." But as some might suggest, that this difference was owing to Ishmael's being the son of the bond-woman, or perhaps to something more wicked in his character than in that of Isaac, he shows, that a distinction of the same kind was also made in the family of Isaac, the son of the free-woman and child of the promise: "And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth,) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger: As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," ver. 10—14. Now the apostle produces these instances to show, that, in all succeeding generations, the children of the flesh, or the mere lineal descendants of Abraham, even in the line of Isaac and Jacob, are not, as such, the children of God, or the spiritual seed; and that, therefore, though a great part of Abraham's natural seed did not obtain the spiritual promise, but were rejected as unbelievers, yet in this there was no failure in the divine promise, for it was never made to such, but only to Abraham's seed by faith, who alone are the children of the promise, and counted for the seed.

With respect to the temporal promise, that was not restricted to the spiritual seed, as has been shown; for the history of the nation of Israel clearly informs us, that they obtained and possessed the land of Canaan and its temporal blessings for many ages, according to the promise of it made to Abraham and his seed after him. And though it was absolutely necessary to their peaceable and comfortable possession of it, that they



should acknowledge and worship the true God, and abstain from idolatry, (which was a breach of the national covenant whereby he stood related to them as their God;) yet they are described in general as a stiff-necked and rebellious people, not only when entering into the possession of it, Deut. ix. 6, 7. but after they had possessed it near 1500 years, Acts vii. 51, 52, 53. The possession of the land of Canaan, therefore, being common to the nation of Israel, did not discriminate the children of the spiritual promise.

I shall only add, on the distinction of the seed, that Mr. W. would do well to consider attentively what the apostle means by saying, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," or, there is a new creation; "Old things are past away, behold, all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 16, 17. To "know no man after the flesh," is to acknowledge or esteem no man as a child of God, or a true christian, on account of his carnal descent or connection with believers, or any carnal consideration whatever, and particularly those things which the carnal Jews boasted of, such as their being the seed of Abraham, of the stock of Israel, circumcised the eighth day, &c. all which the apostle afterwards enumerates, and terms *the flesh*, ch. xi. 18, 22. Philip. iii. 4—7. and declares that, in Christ Jesus, such things are of no avail, but a new creature, or faith which worketh by love, Gal. v. 6. ch. vi. 15. He admits that formerly they made the flesh the rule of their judgment and ground of esteem, even of the Messiah himself, as being peculiarly related to them according to the flesh, and on account of the worldly expectations

they had from him, such as his restoring again the kingdom to Israel; but that *from henceforth*, or from the time that they were enlightened to perceive the glorious ends of Christ's death and resurrection (ver. 14, 15.) and the spiritual nature of his kingdom and subjects, their regard to him was no longer influenced by such carnal considerations; nor did they esteem any one as belonging to Christ, or of the true Israel of God, but as being a new creature: See also Gal. vi. 15, 16. By this rule of judging, they acknowledged none of Abraham's natural offspring as his spiritual seed but believers, who were but a remnant of them, Rom. xi. 5. and, by the same rule, they regarded Gentile believers as the spiritual seed of Abraham though the natural seed of heathens, Gal. iii 7, 29. If therefore none of believing Abraham's natural posterity were known or acknowledged by the apostles as his spiritual seed, but those of them who appeared to be new creatures, and walked in the steps of his faith, by what rule are we to esteem the infant natural seed of believers to be the spiritual seed, of whose faith and regeneration we cannot possibly have the smallest evidence?

Among many other strange things it has been said, that the scripture rule is, that we should look upon infants as in the very same state of salvation as their believing parents are. But there is no such rule to be found in all the word of God. On the contrary, the scripture assures us, that, in their first birth, they are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, Psal. li. 5. This is the state which they derive equally from believing as unbelieving parents. The spiritual birth does not consist in the faith or character of a proxy or representative, but in a personal change in the sub-

jects of it; and therefore cannot be known by us till that change visibly appears in the individuals themselves, be their parents what they may. Therefore to look upon infants as the spiritual seed, because they are the natural offspring of believers, is plainly to know them after the flesh.

Still, however, it is asserted, that the covenant of circumcision, wherein God promised to be a God to Abraham and to his seed after him in their generations, is the same for substance with the new covenant, or what is commonly termed the covenant of grace, differing only in some circumstances, relating to the mode of its sign, and extent of its administration: And their main proof for this is, that Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had in uncircumcision. But this rather proves, that the covenant of circumcision was not the same with the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace, or new covenant, is that by which sinners are justified, and in which God promises to remember their sins and iniquities no more. The blood of Christ is the blood of that covenant which was shed for the remission of sins, and men are justified through faith in that blood. The promise of this covenant was made to Abraham and confirmed of God in Christ, when the gospel was before preached to him concerning God's justifying the heathen through faith; in these words, "In thee shall all nations be blessed," Gen. xii. 3. compared with Gal. iii. 8, 17. And herein lay the object of Abraham's faith, through which he was justified long before he received the sign of circumcision. Now let us attend to the design of the apostle in saying, that "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith



which he had in uncircumcision :” And, whether we consider the words themselves, or the scope of the apostle’s reasoning, it is evident to a demonstration, that the apostle’s design is to show, that Abraham was not justified by the covenant of circumcision, but altogether independent of it, and while he was in uncircumcision ; and that he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had in his uncircumcised state ; and on this he grounds his argument, that neither Jew nor Gentile are justified either by circumcision or the works of the law, but only by faith, as Abraham himself was. Now if Abraham was not justified by the covenant of circumcision, but previous to, and independent of it, how can it be the same for substance with the covenant of grace by which alone sinners can be justified ? The covenant of circumcision was not the same with the covenant of grace, or the promise of it which extended to the Gentiles, but was evidently a covenant peculiar to the natural posterity of Abraham, and was the beginning and foundation of an intermediate typical economy, which served as a partition wall to distinguish and separate the nation of Israel from all other people till the Seed should come of them to bless all nations ; and accordingly when the Seed came, and broke down the middle wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles by his death, circumcision was declared to avail nothing, and so was set aside like every other typical institution, and is represented as belonging to the *letter* and the *flesh*, as opposed to the *spirit*, Rom. ii. 27, 29. Philip iii. 4, 5. Gal. vi. 12, 13. And though the Jewish converts were indulged in circumcision for a time after it was virtually set aside by the death of Christ ; yet it was absolutely prohibited to

the Gentile converts as of the most pernicious tendency, and is always connected with the law as opposed to their justification by faith, and to the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, Gal. v. 1, 5. It is very remarkable, that while the inspired apostles of Christ so often cite the original promise made to Abraham, to show that the blessings of the gospel were to be extended to the Gentiles, they should never so much as once mention the covenant of circumcision in that view: Nor do they give the smallest hint concerning the entail of that covenant upon New Testament believers and their natural seed, which is now so much insisted on as the main argument for infant baptism.

Mr. W. affirms, "That the Sinai covenant is represented in the apostle's reasoning as quite distinct from the covenant made with Abraham four hundred and thirty years before; and therefore, in forming our ideas of the latter, the former should be left out of view.—The scheme of God, revealed in the Abrahamic covenant, might have gone on to its fulfilment independent of the law." P. 41.

The covenant which was made with Abraham, and confirmed of God in Christ four hundred and thirty years before the law, was not the covenant of circumcision, nor peculiar to Abraham's natural posterity as that was, but contained the promise of blessing all nations; see Gen. xii. 3. with Gal. iii. 8. Now though this covenant was distinct from the Sinai covenant, yet the law delivered in the latter was subservient to the promise in the former, by making men sensible of their need of the promised blessing; and therefore in forming our ideas of the original covenant made with Abraham, the law ought not to be *left out of view*.

Nor does it become us to say, that the scheme of God might have been otherwise fulfilled than it actually was. But with respect to the covenant of circumcision, which was not made for twenty-four years after the former, that was not *quite distinct* from the Sinai covenant, but was the very foundation of it. Let us trace the connection :

When the Lord covenanted to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's natural posterity, he foretold their previous affliction in Egypt and deliverance out of it, Gen. xv. 13—17. When they had multiplied into a nation in that kingdom, and were in actual bondage, the promise made to Abraham of their deliverance was repeated, Exod. vi. 3—7. and the book of Exodus gives us a clear historical account of the fulfilment of this, so far as relates to their redemption from Egypt. In the covenant of circumcision he had promised to be a God to Abraham's seed after him, Gen. xvii. 7. This promise was also repeated to Abraham's natural seed while they were groaning under the bondage of the Egyptian yoke; "And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians," Exod. vi. 7. and this was actually and formally accomplished, when he took them as a nation into a covenant relation to himself at Sinai, and declares, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," Exod. xx. 2. See the whole of that remarkable transaction, Exod. xix. xx. xxiv. Again, in the covenant of circumcision the Lord promised to Abraham, "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlast-



ing possession," Gen. xvii. 8. This promise was also renewed to them in Egypt; "I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for an heritage," Exod. vi. 8. The book of Joshua gives us a plain historical account of the accomplishment of this promise, where we are told that "the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers: and they possessed it, and dwelt therein," Josh. xxi. 43. If therefore we would form proper ideas of the covenant of circumcision, we must take into consideration the renewal of its promises to the nation of Israel, with the historical facts in which these promises were actually fulfilled to them, and consequently explained. But Mr. W. would have these things *left out of view*. They indeed plainly prove that the covenant of circumcision was made with all Abraham's seed according to the flesh, and that its promises to them, as a nation, were of a temporal nature; consequently that it is now set aside under the gospel, together with the Sinai covenant which was founded on it.

He says, "That none of the promises, either the temporal or the spiritual, were made to the fleshly seed of Abraham, merely on the footing of carnal descent." P. 35.

I know not exactly what he means by *the footing of carnal descent*. Taking it in connection with what he says in the preceding page, his meaning seems to be, that none of the promises, no not even the temporal, were made to any of Abraham's natural posterity, but to his spiritual seed alone. And if so, it plainly follows, that all to whom the temporal promises were accomplished must have been the spiritual seed of

Abraham ! I think I may be excused from making any reply to this.

He observes, that Israel in the wilderness came short of the land of Canaan through *unbelief*. P. 36.

This is fully granted, for the apostle says the same, Heb. iii. 18, 19. But then Mr. W. conjectures, that their unbelief did not only respect the promise which God made of the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed after him, and a distrust of his veracity and power, accompanied with rebellious complaints and murmurings ; but that it implied ignorance and unbelief of the spiritual import of that promise, and included also ignorance and unbelief of the other gospel promises made in connection with it in the same covenant—They were unbelievers of the gospel, which was then revealed in the promises of the covenant made with Abraham. P. 37.

When we look into the history of Israel in the wilderness, we shall find their unbelief manifested on many occasions ; but the particular instance in view, was their unbelief of God's promise of the land of Canaan, distrusting his power and faithfulness to accomplish it, and being discouraged by the evil report of the spies ; they murmured and rebelled against him, notwithstanding the astonishing miracles he had already wrought on their behalf. This is what is assigned as the cause why the Lord sware, that none of the men of that evil generation should see that good land which he sware to give unto their fathers : See Num. xiv. Deut. i. 26—40. But we nowhere read, either in the Old or New Testament, that they came short of the earthly rest, because they did not believe the *spiritual import* of that promise, or because they did not understand and believe the

mystical sense of the other promises connected with it in the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham. Mr. W. has the advantage of the New Testament revelation, which lays open the spiritual or mystical sense both of Old Testament promises and types; but it does not follow that Israel in the wilderness had these things laid open to them, so as that they might have stedfastly looked to the end of that which is abolished. If it is not recorded that the mystical sense of the typical economy was explained to them, how can we possibly know that it was? Or how can we suppose that they were so severely punished, and yet the main part of their guilt never once mentioned? The apostle says, "For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it," Heb. iv. 2. The words literally translated are, "For we are evangelized as well as they were; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it:" i. e. We Christians are favoured with the good news of the heavenly rest, as well as Israel in the wilderness were with the good news of the earthly rest in Canaan; but the word which they heard concerning that rest did not profit them, because they did not believe it. That this is the sense is clear from the whole of the apostle's reasoning; for the rest which Israel came short of through unbelief was evidently the possession of the land of Canaan; and the rest which Christians are exhorted to labour to enter into is the heavenly rest, the rest that remains for the people of God. It should be observed, that *faith* and its opposite *unbelief* are not confined to the spiritual truths and promises of the gospel of



Christ, but respect any truth which God may reveal, or promise he may make even concerning temporal things. It is a believing, or disbelieving God in what he says, whatever be the subject. This is clear with respect to *faith* from several instances of it mentioned in Heb. xi. and also with respect to *unbelief* in the case of those whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. I cannot think that Mr. W. will affirm (though his argument requires it,) that all who died in the wilderness fell short of the heavenly rest, or that all who entered the land of Canaan believed to the saving of the soul.

He returns again to the covenant made with Abraham, and having quoted Gal. iii. 17. he says, "The expression employed in this quotation to describe the covenant made with Abraham, that it was *confirmed before of God in Christ*, seems most decisively to establish the view that has been given of it. The promises of this covenant were made with a prospective regard to Christ, as their foundation." P. 42, 43.

But the covenant which the apostle refers to in that passage is not the covenant of circumcision, (which would have been very foreign to his argument with the Galatians), but it is the covenant which was confirmed of God in Christ four hundred and thirty years before the law, as I have already noticed, and is mentioned, ver. 8.

He thinks, "It will surely be admitted, that there is but *one covenant*, the promises of which were made either *to Christ*, or *in Christ*; but the promises of the Abrahamic covenant are expressly declared to have been so made; whence it appears to follow, that this covenant was nothing less than the glorious gospel of the blessed God; his everlasting covenant of grace." P. 43.

It will not be admitted "that there is but *one covenant*." It has been shown, that there were more covenants than one made with Abraham; and that from these sprung other two covenants very different in their nature, viz. the old covenant at Sinai which gendereth to bondage, and the new covenant in Christ's blood, which answereth to Jerusalem which is above, the free woman, and the mother of all God's children, Gal. iv. 24—27. Does Mr. W. mean to set aside these distinctions, and to jumble the whole together as one covenant? I am sorry to say that the sequel too clearly manifests that this is his real design: For having quoted the promise—"I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee," Gen. xvii. 7. he proceeds thus,

"In whatever sense we consider God as promising to be the God of Abraham, in the same sense we must consider him as promising to be the God of his seed. The promise is one. No hint is ever given, of his being the God of Abraham in one sense, and the God of his seed in another. Nor does any ground appear for the distinction made in the meaning of the term *seed*, as if he were to be the God of his fleshly seed in one sense, and the God of his spiritual seed in another. The promise, as it stands, is plainly *one* in its import, and to *one seed* in its extent; even the seed mentioned Gal. iii. 16. and considered above." P. 43, 44.

It is certain that God was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in a spiritual and eternal sense, that is, as justifying and bestowing eternal life on them, see Mat. xxii. 32. Luke xiii. 28. Heb. xi. 16. and that all who are of faith are thus blessed with faithful

Abraham, Gal. iii. 9, 29. But must we therefore consider God as promising, in the covenant of circumcision, to be the God of all the natural posterity of Abraham in the same sense as he was to Abraham himself? It is clear beyond all dispute, that God promised in that covenant to be a God to Abraham and to his seed after him in their generations; that the whole of his natural posterity, in the line of Isaac and Jacob, were included in it, without any distinction, and that the token of that covenant was by the divine command to be administered to all of them without exception, "Every man-child among you shall be circumcised," ver. 10. Now, will Mr. W. stand to it, that God was in no other sense the God of Abraham than that in which he was the God of all his natural posterity? Would not this be the same as to affirm, that all Abraham's natural seed, in their successive generations, obtained eternal life? Again, if "there is no ground for the distinction made in the meaning of the term *seed*, as if he were to be the God of his fleshly seed in one sense, and the God of his spiritual seed in another," why does the apostle make a distinction among Abraham's natural seed, (though all included in the covenant of circumcision) between those of them who were of *the circumcision only*, and such as also *walked in the steps of Abraham's faith*? Rom. iv. 12. Why does he say, "They are not all Israel who are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children:—That is, they who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed?" Rom. ix. 6, 7, 8. Here we find a distinction made in the meaning of the term *seed*. It is applied to Abraham's mere natural offspring, and also to his spiritual seed by faith as distinguished from



these; consequently, there must be an answerable distinction as to the sense in which God stood related to them as their God. To the former he was their God in a typical and temporal sense, to the latter in a spiritual and eternal sense.

But Mr. W's design is to show, that none were included in the covenant of circumcision, or had the promise that God would in any sense be their God, but only the spiritual seed of Abraham, "even the seed mentioned Gal. iii. 16. and considered above." I have already shown, that the apostle in Gal. iii. is commenting not on the covenant of circumcision, but on the original promise made to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. which he quotes, ver. 8. and distinguishes it as the covenant which was confirmed of God in Christ four hundred and thirty years before the law, ver. 17. He shows that this covenant included all believers, not only among Abraham's circumcised natural seed, but among uncircumcised Gentiles, ver. 14, 28. and that the promises of this covenant, which are included in the blessing of Abraham, are redemption from the curse, justification, the promise of the Spirit, adoption, and the inheritance, ver. 8, 13, 14, 18, 26, 29. Now, whether we understand the *seed* mentioned ver. 16. to mean *Christ*, as the apostle declares, or the whole *collective body* of which Christ is the head, as Mr. W. explains it, in neither of these senses does it quadrature with the seed mentioned in the covenant of circumcision. It cannot be said that *Christ* was Abraham's seed in their generations, Gen. xvii. 10. Nor are its promises restricted to the *spiritual part* of his natural seed, exclusive of the rest; for no such distinction of the seed, nor any such restriction of the promises are ever mentioned in that covenant: On the contrary,

every man-child, without exception, was to receive the token of that covenant in his flesh. ver. 11, 12. and it was commanded to be administered to them at eight days old, which shows that they had a right to it by birth as the natural seed of Abraham, independent of regeneration or of faith. As to that part of his spiritual seed which consists of *believing Gentiles*, they had nothing to do with the letter of that peculiar covenant, and so were absolutely forbidden to receive the token of it in their flesh, as is clear from the epistle to the Galatians and many other passages; and it is also certain, that they never had any promise or possession of the land of Canaan which was stipulated in that covenant. It is therefore clear beyond all reasonable dispute, that, in the covenant of circumcision, the *seed* of Abraham must be understood to signify literally his natural offspring or posterity in the line of Isaac and Jacob. Besides, the facts recorded in the succeeding history of that people, and the application of the promises made to Abraham respecting them, demonstrate abundantly that they were literally the seed with whom that covenant was made. And thus we may see that the seed to whom the Lord promised in that covenant to be their God, turns out in fact to be the nation of Israel; and as to the new covenant sense of that promise, it falls under another consideration.

Mr. W. is of opinion that God was the God of the nation of Israel in the same sense as he was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or as he is the God of all true believers, that is, in the new covenant sense of that promise, and for this he cites Matth. xxii. 31, 32. Heb. ix. 13—16. Jer. xxxi. 33. ch. xxxii. 38—40. Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24, 30, 31. ch. xxxvi. 25—28. Heb. viii. 10. P. 44—47.

The two first of these citations show in what sense he was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and indeed of all true believers who follow the steps of their faith. The rest are promises of the new covenant itself, and therefore cannot show in what sense God was the God of the whole nation of Israel under the old. When God promises to make a new covenant, he says it was to be "*not according to the covenant which he made with their fathers*, in the day when he took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt," but entirely of another nature, both in its blessings, and in the character of the people covenanted, Jer. xxxi. 31—35. and so the apostle terms it a *better covenant*, which was established upon *better promises*, Heb. viii. 6. But if the promise of his being their God implied nothing more than what it did in the former covenant with old Israel, I cannot see with what propriety it could be called a *better covenant*, or be said to be established upon *better promises*.

He states a very proper question on this subject, viz. "In what sense is it that God calls himself the God of the nation of Israel; and in assuming this relation to them, as a nation, declares, that he remembers the covenant made with their fathers—as he does in Exod. vi. 4—8. Lev. xxvi. 12. and in other places?" In answer to this he observes,

"1. It seems to me a fair general principle, that when we find a particular view of any subject, expressly and simply stated by an inspired writer, we should so far admit this view to be a rule for the explanation of other passages of scripture, as that, when there are two possible interpretations of any circumstance connected with it, *that* should be held the right one, which harmonizes with, and illustrates it. It ap



pears to me that nothing can be more express and simple, than what the apostle says in Gal. iii. in connection with the passage before us, that this covenant made with Abraham, *was confirmed of God in Christ*, and that its promises were made to *one seed which is Christ*. If the view given of these expressions, with their connection, is admitted, and I conceive it to be founded on the plain and obvious meaning of the words, it follows, that when God is any where said to *remember his covenant*, the expression ought to be understood in a sense consistent with it." P. 46, 47.

Though this general rule of interpretation were unexceptionable, which it is not; yet, in the present case, it is inapplicable: because, though the covenant made with Abraham "was confirmed of God in Christ," and its "promises were made to one seed, which is Christ," yet none of these expressions refer to the covenant of circumcision, as has been shown, and so do not explain the sense in which God declares himself to be the God of the whole nation of Israel. It is to the covenant of circumcision, which includes the promise of being their God, and of his giving them the land of Canaan, that God refers when about to deliver them out of Egypt, and to put them in possession of it, Exod. vi. 4—9. We need only to read Psal. cv. from ver. 8. to the end, to see how God *remembered his covenant* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the whole series of his dealings with their seed after them, till at last "he gave them the lands of the heathen; and they inherited the labour of the people." No human rule of interpretation, nor process of reasoning, however laboured and ingenious, can be sustained as giving the true sense of scripture promises, when that sense does not agree with the plain historical facts which the

scripture itself states as the fulfilment of these promises. Mr. W's general principle or rule of interpretation in the present case, is founded on a mistake which runs through his whole lectures, namely, That the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, Gen. xii. 3. Gal. iii. 8, 17. is the very same with the covenant of circumcision, Gen. xvii. 7, 8, 10. though it is plain, that the former included the Gentiles, while the latter respected the natural descendants of Abraham, and was part of the partition wall which separated them from other nations. But he proceeds,

"2dly, When he is called *their God*, we are to view them not *as a nation*, or *civil community*, but *as his church*, his professing people." P. 47.

But where does the scripture make such a distinction as this? Where is it declared that God was not their God *as a nation*, but only *as a church*? Was not the nation of Israel a national church? How then could he be called their God as his church, and not as his nation? Does he not say to that nation, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt?" Exod. xx. 2. and "ye shall be unto me a KINGDOM of priests, and an holy NATION," chap. xix. 6. Moses uses this argument with God on their behalf, "Consider that this NATION is thy people," chap. xxxiii. 13. It is evident the Psalmist thought that God was their God as a nation, for he says, "Blessed is the NATION whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his inheritance," Psal. xxxiii. 12. If Mr. W. could show, that Israel as a church were Abraham's spiritual seed, but as a nation they were only his carnal seed, this would be doing something to the purpose; but a mere verbal distinction, or the difference of a name, could never make

any difference in the nature of the people, or in their relation to God. The government of that nation was a Theocracy, the government of God himself. He not only gave them laws respecting the whole form of their religious worship, but also for regulating their secular and civil affairs as a state; so that he was the very king of that nation even in a political sense; and hence he was displeased with that people for desiring a king like the rest of the nations; and says, "they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them," 1 Sam. viii. 7. And though he allowed them a king, yet that king was to be of his choosing, and to be under his express command and direction in the matters of government, and of peace and war; so that the Lord still remained the King of that nation, which is included in the idea of his being their God. Thus he was, during that temporal and typical economy, the God of the whole nation of Israel in such a sense as he never was to any other nation of this world. With regard to the spiritual seed of Abraham who were among them, he was their God in a spiritual and eternal sense; but not by virtue of the covenant of circumcision, or the old covenant founded thereon, which included the whole nation, but by faith in the promised Seed, by which they became interested in the new covenant to be made after those days, and heirs of its spiritual blessings.

But Mr. W. is sensible that this does not suit the point he has in view, which is the baptism of all the natural seed of believers; and therefore he labours to show, that God was the God of the national church of old Israel, in the same sense as he is the God of the true Israel by the new covenant; and, in short, that the christian church does not differ from that erected



at Sinai, but is only a restoration of it. To evince this he observes, That when God made his covenant with Abraham, his family became "the household of faith;" otherwise the adults would not have submitted to the painful rite of circumcision—That the nation of Israel became the church of God, when they *believed* the message sent to them by Moses, and *bowed their heads* and *worshipped*, Exod. iii. and iv.—That they kept the passover as a profession of that faith, chap. xii.—That the reason why the race who came out of Egypt fell in the wilderness was *unbelief*, which showed that their former professions of faith were hypocritical—That, on entering into Canaan, the generation then existing, "avouched the Lord to be their God," and, on the footing of that profession, were circumcised with their little ones, Deut. xxvi. 17, &c. Josh. v. 2—9. P. 47, 48, 49.

These are his proofs that the family of Abraham, and the church of Israel, were *believers*. The family of Abraham that were born in his house, or bought with his money, no doubt believed something which made them submit to be circumcised, and among other things, they might believe that, if they did not submit, Abraham might dispose of them to other masters. The elders of Israel believed the word of the Lord respecting their temporal deliverance from slavery: but they soon after disbelieved it, Exod. v. 21. chap. vi. 9, 12. and whatever faith they professed in keeping the passover, it seems to have entirely failed them at the Red Sea, chap. xiv. 11. 12. After they had got safely through, we are told that "the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses," ver. 31. yet Mr. W. is obliged to admit, that they fell in the wilderness through unbelief, and gave abundant evi-

dence that their professions of faith were hypocritical, "coming out of feigned lips." Now, whether shall we consider them, as, upon the whole, believers or unbelievers? Surely the Lord's judgment of them was according to truth when he said, "they are a very forward generation, children in whom is no faith," Deut. xxxii. 20. But Mr. W. observes, that, "on entering into Canaan, the generation then existing avouched the Lord to be their God, Deut. xxvi. 17, &c. and on the footing of that profession were circumcised with their little ones," Josh. v. 2—9. Yet the scripture does not say, that it was on that *footing* they were circumcised, but because they had not been circumcised by the way, ver. 7. Those who fell in the wilderness had also avouched the Lord to be their God, Exod. xix. 8. chap. xxiv. 3, 7. but yet they were not true believers. With regard to those of them who entered into the land of Canaan and possessed it, the Lord himself, and his servant Moses, give a very different view of them from what Mr. W. seems to convey, (see Deut. xxxi. 16.—30) and their history fully verifies that view; for very soon after the death of Joshua they and the rising generation forsook the Lord and followed other gods, Judg. ii. 11—14.

He admits that "the church was for many ages in a state of great corruption;" but then he adds, "Yet after all, was not the state of Israel of old very similar to the state of *the church of Christ* in many periods after his coming? And to the state of *many individual churches* of the saints? Take, as an example, the case of several of the Asiatic churches to whom the epistles in Rev. ii. and iii. are addressed by the Lord. Several of these churches are severely reprov'd for their corruption. They are called upon to

repent; they are threatened with judgments, and with destruction if they did not. Can any thing, on a small scale, be more exactly parallel to the state and treatment of the ancient church?" P. 49, 50.

Here I would ask, what does he mean by *the church of Christ*, as distinguished from *many individual churches of the saints*? I know of no church of Christ that can be thus distinguished from *individual churches*, but the general assembly and church of the first-born, which includes all true believers; and surely he cannot mean to say, that the corrupt state of the holy catholic church of Christ was at any period similar to the corrupt state of the Jewish church. As to individual visible churches, it must be admitted, that the purest of them, even in the apostolic age, were not without their evils and imperfections; and it is also true, that many of them began very early to degenerate and fall off from their former attainments, particularly with respect to the state of their minds, and were admonished by him who searcheth the reins and hearts. But should some of these churches depart from the faith and obedience of the gospel, and persist in refusing to lay to heart Christ's admonitions and warnings, or to comply with his calls to repentance, I cannot think that Mr. W. would consider such as still possessing the character of *churches of the saints*, though not more corrupt than Israel of old; for he admits "the superior spirituality of the new dispensation, and the more complete discrimination of character which was to take place under it." P. 52. The church of old Israel, notwithstanding all their corruptions, are termed a holy nation, a peculiar people, as being externally separated to God from all other nations, though the greater part of them were a carnal and irregenerate people; but I



cannot think that a nation under the New Testament, similar to old Israel, though it should assume a kind of profession of Christianity, would be acknowledged by Christ, or his apostles, as a christian church, or a church of saints and faithful brethren. Many, indeed, plead the evils with which some of the apostolic churches are blamed, to excuse their continuance in the corrupt communion of a national church; but surely this cannot be Mr. W's motive for stating the corruptions of some of the apostolic churches as *exactly parallel* to those of the Jewish church. His design, I suppose, is to show, that the Old and New Testament churches are the same.

Having cited some prophecies respecting the purging of the church, such as Zech. xiii. 8. Mal. iii. 2, 3. and the words of John the Baptist, Matth. iii. 8—12. he observes, that, "It was *his own floor* that Jesus thus fanned and purged—it was *his own church* to which he thus proved a refiner's fire and fuller's soap—it was *his own vineyard* that he thus cut down with the axe of his judgments, those rotten trees which cumbered the ground." P. 52.

Doubtless the floor, the church, the vineyard were *his own*; but what then? Does it follow from this that they were the same with his New Testament floor, church, or vineyard? The national church and kingdom of Israel were *his own*, so that when he came unto *that* nation he came unto *his own*; yet *his own* received him not, John i. 11. The church and kingdom of Israel was of a worldly constitution. It admitted the use of the sword in its erection, government, and defence. Its inheritance was earthly, and its blessings of a temporal nature. Its sanctuary and ordinances of divine worship were worldly and typical;

and its people in general were carnal, the mere children of the flesh. From this worldly establishment Christ distinguishes his New Testament kingdom or church in his confession before Pontius Pilate; "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." And he intimates that he was to promote his kingdom by "bearing witness unto the truth," and that his subjects are only such as are of the truth" and "hear his voice," John xviii. 36, 37. This is termed *the kingdom of heaven* as distinguished from the Jewish church or kingdom, which was only an earthly prefiguration or shadow of it. This kingdom was proclaimed as *at hand*, or *nigh*, by John the Baptist, and by Christ himself in the days of his flesh, Matth. iii. 2. chap. iv. 17. It is founded on Christ's death and resurrection from the dead, by which he ratified the new covenant with Abraham's spiritual seed of all nations who are blessed in him, and by which also he set aside the old covenant with the national church of Israel, and all the typical and earthly things pertaining to it; admitting none of that people into his new Testament church and kingdom upon the footing of their descent from Abraham, or of their being members of the Jewish church, but as being believers in his name, and born of God, John i. 12, 13. and these were only a *remnant* of them according to the election of grace, Rom. xi. 5. So that though God had his people in all ages, both before and under the Jewish economy, who were saved by faith in the promised Seed; yet the New Testament church is not a continuation of the Jewish church, but is of a very different nature and constitution. He says,

“ It is the uniform manner of the prophets to speak of the Gentiles as being at a future period to be *added*, or *brought in* to the church of God which existed at the time they wrote.” P. 53.

If by the church which existed at the time when the prophets wrote, he means the national church of Israel which was erected at Sinai, he must understand these prophecies to mean, that the Gentiles were to be *added*, or *brought in* to the national church of Israel: But does this agree with the apostolic application of these prophecies, or with the events which took place at the time when God visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name? Far from it. Even the Jewish converts to Christ were formed into churches distinct from the national church or the synagogue, though indulged for a time in some of its usages. As to the Gentile converts, they were not added to the Jewish church, but were absolutely forbidden to be circumcised, or to observe its peculiar institutions. Still he insists,

“ That the ancient church is represented in prophecy as gloriously restored at the coming of Messiah, and as receiving the accession of the Gentiles,” Isa. xlix. 6. Amos ix. 11, 12. P. 54.

To understand these prophecies as referring literally to the national Jewish church, is to understand them exactly as the Jews did; but they were miserably disappointed in their expectations. That national church, instead of being restored, was then broken off through unbelief, and, like the bondwoman and her son, cast out of God's house, Rom. xi. 20. Gal. iv. 22—31. and, as I have already observed, nothing but a small remnant of that nation was acknowledged as the true church of God, and with them, not with the national



church, were the converted Gentiles incorporated, so as to become of twain *one new man* in Christ, Eph. ii. 15. and that not according to the covenant of circumcision, or the old Sinai covenant; but according to the original promise made to Abraham, viz. "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

With respect to Isa. xlix. 6. it is a promise to Christ, not that he should restore the preserved of Israel to their former state in the Jewish church; but that he should convert a number of them to the faith of the gospel, and turn them from their iniquities to God, as Acts iii. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 25. And as to what relates to the Gentiles in this prophecy, we see how the apostle applies it, Acts xiii. 47. With respect to Amos ix. 11, 12. where the Lord promises to "RAISE UP the tabernacle of David that is fallen down, and to close up the breaches thereof, and build it as in the days of old," it does not signify that he would raise up and restore the earthly kingdom of David to its ancient glory and prosperity; but that he would raise up the spiritual kingdom of Messiah the Son of David, and bring in subjects to him from among the Gentiles, as appears from the application of this prophecy, Acts xv. 14.—18. where it is used as an argument against circumcising the Gentiles who had turned to God. Mr. W. observes,

"That when the conversion of the Jews, in the latter days, is spoken of, it is under the idea of *returning*, or *restoration*; which could never have been the case, if the Old Testament church had been entirely different from the New; inasmuch as there would be no propriety in speaking of their *returning*, or being *restored* to a church to which they had never belonged." For these expressions he cites Isa. xlix. 6. Hos. iii. 4, 5. P. 55.

Here he owns that it is the *conversion* of the Jews that is spoken of under the idea of their *restoration* or *returning*; and if so, these expressions must be somewhat figurative; but is there therefore *no propriety* in them? We are sure that the remnant of that nation, who were converted in the days of the apostles, were not *restored* to the Jewish church of which they were already natural members; but they were separated from that church, and added to the Lord and to one another in the strictest union, Acts ii. 41, 47. Acts v. 14. chap. xi. 24. and were formed into churches of Christ throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, Acts ix. 31. As to Hos. iii. 4, 5. if that prophecy relates to the conversion of the Jews in the latter days, it cannot mean their *returning* again to the Jewish church. The words are, "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their King:" i. e. Messiah the antitype of David. This is a clear prophecy of their repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ: And in what other way can we suppose them to *return* in the latter days than as the remnant of them returned at first, when returning to Judaism, or the Jewish church, was considered as apostacy? But he produces another passage to prove that the Jewish and Christian churches are the same:

"Still more apposite and remarkable is the language of Paul, Rom xi. 23, 24. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graff them in *again*. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive tree; how much more shall they which be the *natural branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree." Were the Old

and New Testament churches entirely different, it is not easy to see with what propriety the Jews, in being brought into the latter, can be said to be grafted into *their own* olive tree—grafted in *again*, i. e. into the same tree from which they had been cut off." P. 55, 56.

By the good olive tree he understands the Old Testament church, otherwise he thinks it could with no propriety be called *their own* olive tree; and he imagines that it is into that church they are again to be grafted. The apostle indeed speaks of Israel who were broken off through unbelief, as again to be grafted into their own olive tree: But by this tree he does not mean the nation of Israel, the whole frame of whose constitution, order and ordinances of worship, as a church, were settled and established by a peculiar national covenant; for he is evidently speaking of that good olive tree into which the believing Gentiles were grafted among the natural branches, the believing Jews, and with them partaking of its root and fatness, ver. 17. but the believing Gentiles were not grafted into the national church of Israel, and so that church cannot be meant by the good olive tree. I apprehend the apostle, by this figure, intends the original promise made to Abraham, that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed. This seed is Christ, who is the root from which all the true branches derive fatness. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were separated unto God for the sake of Christ, that seed that was to spring of them, and bless all nations; and for his sake also their posterity, the whole house of Israel, were separated unto God from all other people, and were favored with many distinguished privileges. The Jews were naturally related to Christ according to the flesh, and so are termed the natural branches. But when Christ came unto his



own, and the greater part of them received him not, their natural relation to him was of no more avail; as they had no spiritual connection with Christ, they were broken off. It was only to those of them that received him, believing on his name, that he gave power to become the true sons of God, John i. 11, 12. These were grafted into Christ by faith, and were branches in him the true vine, chap. xv. 1—6. And it was among these believing Jews that Gentile converts, who were of the wild olive, were grafted in, being made "fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel," Eph. iii. 6. and thus partook with them of the root and fatness of the good olive tree. And so when the natural branches, which were broken off through unbelief, shall be grafted in again, it will not be into Moses, but into Christ; nor into the national church erected at Sinai, but into that which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. Mr. W. lays much stress upon the word *again*, as if it meant their being put into their former Jewish church state. But the word is not always to be taken in so strict a sense. The Galatians are said to turn *again* to the weak and beggarly elements of the Jewish law, and to desire *again* to be in bondage to them, though they never observed these things before, Gal. iv. 9. When a man is said to be born *again*, it does not signify a repetition of his first birth, but a birth altogether different; and to be begotten *again* to a lively hope, does not signify the restoration of a hope which we formerly possessed: So when it is said that the Jews, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted again into their own olive tree, it does not mean that they shall be put into the same church-state in

which the nation of Israel formerly was; but that they shall be converted to the faith of the gospel, and partake with believing Gentiles of the blessing of Abraham through Jesus Christ. The reason why Mr. W. contends that the Jewish and Christian churches are the same, seems to be for the sake of the covenant of circumcision, from whence he infers the baptism of the infant seed of New Testament believers. He says,

“That while the promises of the covenant made with Abraham were made to the spiritual seed, consisting of believers of all ages and nations of the world; yet there was in them a *primary* respect to the natural offspring of Abraham. This observation is of considerable moment on the subject under consideration.”  
P. 56.

If the subject under consideration be infant baptism, I see not how this observation is of any moment at all on that subject, unless it be to Jews; for neither Gentile believers nor their infants are the *natural* offspring of Abraham, and therefore are not the objects of that *primary* respect. He explains what he means by a *primary* respect.

“That primary respect, which I now speak of, as being had in the promise to the natural offspring, is a respect not merely primary according to the *order of time*, but according to a *peculiarity of regard*, and according to what may be termed the *natural course of things*. That God does show such regard to children on account of their parents, we find both intimated and exemplified in many parts of the scripture history.” For this he refers us to Gen. xviii. 17—19. Exod. xx. 5, 6. Jer. xxxi. 31—33. Rom. xi. 1, 28.

I freely admit that the promises made to Abraham had a *primary* respect to his natural offspring, and

have shown this in another publication.\* But on this subject we must distinguish Abraham's natural offspring into the *children of the flesh* and the *children of the promise*, and also the promises themselves into *temporal* and *spiritual*.

I. Abraham had a numerous natural posterity by Hagar and Keturah, Gen. xxv. and in the line of Isaac by his grandson Esau, chap. xxxvi. so that he literally became the father of many nations; but though these were the natural offspring of Abraham, and circumcised, the promises had no *primary* respect to them; they were not heirs with him, nor made any part of the holy covenanted nation or church of God, even in a typical sense. This primary respect was restricted to his natural posterity in the line of Jacob, the children of Israel, and that, not according to the *natural course of things*, or any natural right or excellency in them that might entitle them to a preference, Deut. ix. 4, 5, 6, 24. but according to the sovereign purpose of God, who had elected them to be a peculiar people to himself, Rom. ix. 11—14. But here it must carefully be observed, that even among this selected part of Abraham's natural posterity, there was a distinction still more wide and of greater importance than the former, viz. the distinction between the mere children of the flesh, who were of the circumcision only, or Jews outwardly, and those of them who were not of the circumcision only, but also walked in the steps of that faith of their father Abraham, Rom. ii. 28, 29. chap. iv. 12. The former made up the greater part of the church or congregation of Israel, and, as mere subjects of the old Sinai covenant, are classed with

\* See Defence of Believers' Baptism in this Volume.



the children of Hagar the bond-woman, Gal. iv. 24, 25. The latter were always but a small remnant in comparison of the number of the children of Israel; and though by an election of grace, they were heirs of the spiritual promise made to Abraham, yet they were kept in a state of minority, under the discipline and tutorage of the Mosaic law, until Christ came and bestowed upon them the full liberty and privileges of sons, Gal. iii. 24, 25. chap. iv. 1—8.

2. In considering the *primary respect* which the promises made to Abraham had to his natural posterity, we must distinguish these promises into *temporal and spiritual*.

With respect to the *temporal promises*, these had not only a *primary* but *peculiar* respect to Abraham's natural offspring, in the line of Jacob, such as their being multiplied, redeemed from Egypt, put in possession of the land of Canaan, and their enjoyment of the good things of that land; and in all these blessings their infant seed, according to the *natural course of things*, must have shared with them; even as, on the other hand, they must have suffered with them in their calamities; for temporal promises or threatenings are frequently of such a nature as to affect succeeding generations.

As to the *spiritual promises*, which are included in the blessing of Abraham, such as justification, the promise of the Spirit, the true adoption of sons, &c. these had also a *primary*, though not a *peculiar* or *exclusive*, respect to Abraham's natural offspring. That they had not an *exclusive* respect to them is clear from the very words of the covenant with Abraham on which the apostle's argument is founded, viz. "In thee," or, "in thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,"

which includes Gentiles as well as Jews, Gal. iii. 8, 14, 16, 17, 28. and with this the facts recorded in the accomplishment of that promise perfectly agree. But, as I said, the spiritual promises had a *primary* respect to the natural offspring of Abraham. When the promised Seed came to bless all nations, he came first unto his own nation, being sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and was a minister of the circumcision to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. The gospel was first preached to the Jews both by Christ himself and his apostles ; and we find Peter urging and encouraging them to repent and be converted, by the primary concern they had in the covenant which God made with their fathers respecting Christ, whom he had now first raised up to them, and sent to bless them, Acts iii. 25, 26. The first church of the saints was gathered from among them, being begotten with the word of truth, that they might be a kind of first fruits of his creatures ; and from that church sounded out the word of God unto the nations, that the Gentiles might be made partakers of their spiritual things, Rom. xv. 27. Thus the spiritual promises had a *primary* respect to the natural offspring of Abraham. But as the bulk of that nation rejected Christ when he came, and persecuted his followers, neither their being the circumcised seed of Abraham, nor their national relation to God by the Sinai covenant, could entitle them to the privileges of free sons and heirs ; and so they were, like the bond-woman and her son, cast out of God's house, Gal. iv. 22—31. John viii. 31—37. But Mr. W. produces another passage.

“ There is an expression also used by Paul respecting the Jews in their present state of unbelief, which appears to me inexplicable, except on some

such principle :—" *As touching the election, says he, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes,*" Rom. xi. 28. P. 58.

The apostle is there expressly speaking *touching the election*. Now there was a two-fold election of Abraham's natural seed.—1. There was a *national election* of them, whereby they were chosen to be a peculiar people unto God in distinction from all other nations. See Deut. iv. 37. chap. vii. 6, 7, 8. chap. x. 14, 15. and the reasons assigned for this are, because he loved their fathers and them, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto their fathers.—2. There is an *election of grace*, as opposed to works, and distinguished from their national election, it being only a *remnant* of that nation who belonged to this election in the time of the apostles, Rom. xi. 5, 6. so that though Israel, as a nation, obtained not that which he sought for, yet the election among them obtained it, and the rest, who were not of that election, were blinded, ver. 7—11. Now the election mentioned ver. 28. as it respects those of them who are yet to be grafted in, must be of the same kind with that *election of grace*, according to which a remnant of that people were saved in the apostolic age, and who were a kind of first-fruits or sample of all the true Israel among them. So that whatever general profession of Christianity, as some conceive, that nation may yet assume, it will always hold true, that none of them but the election will obtain; and that not upon the footing of their ancient national election, and fleshly relation to the patriarchs, but purely upon the footing of the same sovereign free mercy that was shown to the Gentiles. So the apostle states it: "For as ye (Gentiles) in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained MERCY through



their unbelief; even so have these (Jews) also now not believed, that through YOUR MERCY they also may OBTAIN MERCY. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief," or shut up all, both Jews and Gentiles in their turns, "in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all," ver. 30, 31, 32. That is, that both of them being upon a level, and equally in a state of guilt and condemnation, their salvation might appear to be of the same free sovereign mercy, and not on account of any thing which distinguished the Jew from the Gentile.

But how then are the election among the Jews said to be beloved for the fathers' sakes? Does not this imply that the distinguishing love of God towards the elect among the Jews took its rise from, or was influenced by, the personal faith or holiness of Abraham, Isaac, and their other godly fathers? To this I answer, that if we understand the words in this sense, it will not be easy to reconcile them to the scripture doctrine of divine grace, which is always opposed to any worthiness in the creature, is represented as sovereign and free to the undeserving, and as leading the objects of it not to value themselves on any natural advantages, or even in having Abraham to their father, but to glory only in the Lord. If they were thus beloved merely for the sake of the godliness of their fathers, Ishmael and Esau with their posterities, and, at any rate, the whole nation of Israel, must have had an equal claim to this peculiarity of divine regard, for they all sprung from the same godly fathers. Abraham himself sprung from idolatrous ancestors, and was called out from the idolatry of his father's house, Josh. xxiv. 6, 14. He had nothing of himself but what he received of sovereign grace. He was justified not by works, but in

believing on him that justifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. 1—6. All the spiritual blessings promised to him, either personally or to his spiritual seed, were of pure grace, through faith; and though his faith wrought with his works, which were approved of God, yet it was not for the sake of these works that any of his posterity were beloved and elected to salvation; for that is an election of grace, not of works, Rom. xi. 5. 6.

I apprehend, therefore, that when the apostle says, "As concerning the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes," he means for the sake of that which God promised to their fathers. The promise to Abraham was, "In thee," or "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xii. 3. chap. xxii. 18. This, the apostle informs us, was the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, and in which the gospel was before preached to Abraham; and he explains this Seed in whom the nations were to be blessed, and to whom the promises were made, to be Christ, Gal. iii. 8, 16, 17. This promise was renewed to Isaac, Gen. xxvi. 4, and to Jacob, chap. xxviii. 14. Now as Christ is the *Seed* that was promised to the fathers, and as it is *in him* that men are blessed; so it must be (*δις*) *through*, or *for the sake* of this Seed that the fathers themselves, as well as their elect offspring, are beloved. The Lord, indeed, says to Abraham, "IN THEE shall all nations be blessed," Gal. iii. 8. And so the apostle terms it "the BLESSING OF ABRAHAM," ver. 14. But this manner of speaking is not to be understood as if Abraham himself was to be the original source, procurer or dispenser of that blessing, or that it was to be bestowed for his sake; but it was a free promise made to him as father of the faithful, and confirmed to him

*in Christ*, who was to come of his seed according to the flesh, and *in whom*, not in Abraham personally considered, all nations were to be blessed. So that whatever temporal blessings and outward privileges were promised to, or conferred on the nation of Israel for the fathers' sakes; yet the spiritual blessings of redemption, which were peculiar to the elect among them, are promised and bestowed only for Christ's sake.

It has been observed, that the promises made to Abraham had a *primary* respect to his natural offspring; and from this it follows, that they can have no such respect to the natural offspring of Gentile believers, for this plain reason, that they cannot have *two primary* respects. There is no absolute promise made to any believer that he shall have a seed, as was made to Abraham. No christian parent is constituted the *father* of the faithful as Abraham was, but is reckoned among his *children*; for "they which are of faith, the same are the CHILDREN of Abraham," Gal. iii. 7. None are the spiritual seed of Abraham, or to be reckoned such, as being the *natural offspring* of believers; but as being *themselves believers*; for such only are declared to be the children of God and Abraham's seed, Gal. iii. 26, 29. The graceless children of believers are no more in covenant with God than those of unbelievers, and to teach them otherwise is to furnish them with a presumptuous claim.

Yet if christian parents set a godly example before their children, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as they are commanded, (and they deserve not the name of christians who neglect this,) their children must have advantages greatly superior to those which the children of Jewish parents



had, though they were the natural seed of Abraham, circumcised in infancy, and early instructed in the letter of the Mosaic law: advantages as much superior, in respect of outward means, as the light, purity, and spirituality of the gospel dispensation excel those of the legal. And though they cannot ensure success to their endeavours, nor baptize them, according to Christ's institution, till they are taught, and the effects of that teaching appear; yet they have ground to hope, that the Lord will bless his own appointed means for their conversion and eternal salvation; for it is in this way that he ordinarily accomplishes the purposes of his grace, though he has not bound himself by any absolute promise to believing parents, that these means shall always prove effectual for the salvation of their children. And here we ought to bow with the deepest reverence before the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, who hath mercy on whom he will, and beware of binding him down by supposed promises with respect to that wherein he hath left himself free. This would be high presumption on the one hand, and tend to infidelity on the other; for when men observe that, in many instances, facts do not agree with the sense in which they understand these promises, they are in danger, instead of relinquishing their error, of suspecting the faithfulness of God.

Mr. W. introduces his third Lecture with what he calls a favourite maxim with many, viz. "That, in considering the observances to which we are bound as christians, we have nothing to do with the Old Testament scriptures. These must be completely laid aside. We have no title to interpret them, or to act on such interpretation.—This principle is very often brought forward to preclude all arguing as to our

practice in baptizing children from the nature of the Abrahamic covenant." P. 68.

The Baptists in general make as much use of the Old Testament scriptures as others do. They believe that all the Old Testament scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness ; and, in short, that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning as christians. But then, they do not think themselves bound, as christians, to observe all the *positive* institutions of the Old Testament, nor indeed any of them as such, however much the ancient Judaizers insisted on this. Nor do they think that a *positive* institution, such as circumcision is, can, by any process of reasoning whatever, be converted into a rule, precedent, or warrant for infant-baptism, concerning which there is not a single syllable either in the Old or New Testaments. The baptism of believers is an institution of Christ, and peculiar to the New Testament dispensation. It is a *positive* institution, founded entirely on the express will of the Instituter, and abstract from the revelation of his will concerning it, can be deduced from no other principle, natural or moral, with which we are acquainted ; and therefore all arguments for infant-baptism, drawn from the covenant of circumcision, are altogether inconclusive and nugatory. That there can be no positive ordinance of divine worship which christians are bound, or even warranted, to observe, without a revelation of the will of God concerning it by express precept or clear example, is a maxim fully admitted by all consistent Protestants, when contending against the superstitious inventions of the church of Rome, or even the ceremonies of the church of England. But Mr. W. says,

“ I think this maxim might be fairly and successfully combated, as a general principle, upon general grounds.” P. 68.

I know not what *general grounds* he has in view ; but the subject in hand is a *particular positive institution*, which can neither be combated nor defended upon general grounds, but upon the particular and express revelation of the will of God concerning it. This is its only ground, and with this single ground it must stand or fall. But if Mr. W. could fairly and successfully overthrow this maxim, as applied to *positive institution*, he would do more than all the abettors of clerical authority and superstition have hitherto been able to do ; for they have been obliged to combat this maxim by asserting that the church, i. e. the clergy, have a right to enact such religious institutions and ceremonies as they in their wisdom may think proper. A sentiment this, which I am fully persuaded Mr. W. would not adopt, though infant-baptism itself should be at stake, as in fact it is. But though he thinks the above maxim might be fairly and successfully combated, yet he declines the task as being quite unnecessary. His words are,

“ Yet I am very well pleased that such proof is, in the present instance, quite unnecessary ; for it happens most fortunately, that the covenant made with Abraham is a portion of the Old Testament scriptures, as fully and amply explained in the New as any other to which reference is made. This I have attempted to show from the preceding verses, taken in connection with the third chapter of the epistle to the Galatians. So that, even upon this limited principle, supposing it admitted to its full extent, we have an unquestioned title to understand it, and found arguments upon it.” P. 68.



That the covenant made with Abraham is a portion of the Old Testament scriptures—that it is explained in the New—that he has an unquestioned title to understand it according to that explanation, and to found arguments upon it agreeably to the plain scope and design of the apostolic explanation, is freely admitted; and if these are the things which he has been attempting to show by his lectures on Rom. iv. in connection with Gal. iii. he might have saved himself much ingenious labour; for I know no Baptist who entertains the least doubt as to these particulars. But what has all this to do with the question about *positive institution*, such as baptism is? There is not a word about infant-baptism in the Abrahamic covenant; nor does the apostle in all his reasoning upon it in Rom. iv. and Gal. iii. give the least hint of infant-baptism, either directly or indirectly; the whole scope and design of his reasoning being to establish the doctrine of free justification by faith without circumcision or the works of the law. Though I am persuaded that Mr. W. is a sincere friend of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith; yet I am sorry to observe, that, throughout his lectures on these two chapters, his main drift is quite foreign to that of Paul, it being to establish infant-baptism, a point which the apostle had not at all in his view. No part of his argument supposes or implies it, nor does it appear to have entered into his thoughts; nor indeed can we reasonably suppose that it did, as it is altogether a human invention, which, so far as it obtains, supersedes and makes void the commandment of Christ respecting the baptism of believers. Therefore, though Mr. W. has an unquestioned title to understand the New Testament explanation of the Abrahamic covenant, and to found

such arguments upon it as are clearly supported by that explanation; yet he has no title to found arguments for infant-baptism on an explanation which has not the least reference to that subject, a subject which can have no foundation, but in positive institution.

He gives the substance of his arguments from the Abrahamic covenant in the following three particulars:

“ 1. If it has been proved that the covenant made with Abraham, was the same in the substance of its import, with the New Covenant, being confirmed of God in Christ, then that covenant still exists. It could not be disannulled by the law which was four hundred and thirty years after it.” P. 69.

*Ans.* It has been shown, that though circumcision had a mystical import, as all typical institutions had, yet the covenant which was confirmed of God in Christ, recorded Gen. xii. 3. and repeated chap. xxii. 18. was not the covenant of circumcision, which included all Abraham's male-seed without distinction, and also his slaves born in his house, or bought with his money; but it was a gospel promise that *believers of all nations* should be blessed in Christ, without regard to circumcision; for so the apostle explains it, Gal. iii. 8, 9. Rom. iv. 9—13. It was therefore a promise of the new and everlasting covenant which was to be made long after those days, and ratified in the blood of Christ.

“ 2. I have,” he says, “ endeavoured to prove, from a variety of passages in the word of God, that the promises made to the Jewish fathers, had a *primary respect* to their natural offspring.—The same thing, in my judgment, still continues. The same *primary respect* is still had in the promise, to the seed of believing parents.” P. 70.

*Ans.* It has been admitted, that the promises made to the Jewish fathers had a *primary respect* to their natural offspring. The *temporal promises* had a *peculiar* respect to them as a nation, as their whole history proves ; but the *spiritual promises* had a respect only to those of them who were of the election of grace. This is clear both from the doctrine of the New Testament on that subject, and from the facts relating to the accomplishment of these promises. By the *promise* Mr. W. chiefly means the *spiritual* promise, for he explains it as containing the spiritual blessings of justification, sanctification, and the inheritance, P. 70, 72.—By the *children* to whom this promise has a primary respect, he intends the *natural* descendants of Gentile believers, as such, for to such only does his argument relate. So that he considers the fleshly offspring of Gentile believers, in their infancy, or without any regard to their faith, to be the seed of Abraham, to whom the spiritual promise has a *primary*, or, as he also terms it, a *peculiar respect* : And this *peculiarity* of respect he explains by distinguishing it from God's *rich and sovereign mercy*, whereby he progressively enlarges his family, by *bringing in sinners from the world*. P. 72. This distinction appears to me to imply, That the natural seed of Gentile believers are all born in covenant with God : That they never were of the world as others are, but were always the children of God and of his family ; and so have not the same need that others have of that rich and sovereign mercy which is exercised in bringing in uncovenanted sinners from the world. I wish not, however, to impute such a sentiment to Mr. W. ; for though the above distinction plainly imports it, yet it is possible that he was not aware of this.



The children of believing parents have indeed many outward advantages which other children have not, at least to the same degree. They have the pious example, the prayers, the particular care, and religious instruction of their parents, which the Lord often blesses to their conversion and salvation: But if they are by nature the children of wrath even as others, they are no more in covenant with God, till they are born again, than the children of unbelievers are. And though it should be granted that the Lord more ordinarily selects a seed to serve him from among the former than from among the latter; yet it affords not the least warrant for baptizing them in their infancy, or till they become the proper subjects of it by a profession of their faith in Christ, as the law of baptism expressly requires, and which, in this respect, differs essentially from the law of circumcision. He adds,

“3. I have endeavoured to prove, that the covenant made with Abraham is *one*, containing the promises of temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings to *one seed*, viz. the spiritual. I have endeavoured to prove that circumcision was connected with this covenant, in this view of it, *as a whole*:—that this ordinance was the sign and seal of the promises of this covenant, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to all their believing seed—signifying or representing to them all the same things, even the spiritual blessings of justification and sanctification, in connection with the coming of Messiah from the loins of Abraham,” &c. P. 72.

*Ans.* Pædobaptists, who have considered this subject, have been obliged to admit, that when all the promises made to Abraham first and last are collected into *one* covenant, they form a *mixt covenant*, including in it two future covenants or dispensations, as they

term them ; that it contains two different kinds of promises, temporal and spiritual ; and also two different kinds of seeds, the mere natural seed of Abraham, and his spiritual believing seed : And they are also obliged to admit, that circumcision, the token of this covenant, and the temporal promises of it, belonged in common to all the natural posterity of Abraham in the line of Jacob, while the spiritual promises respected only his spiritual seed by faith. But Mr. W. not content with throwing all the promises into *one* covenant, viz. that of circumcision, has endeavoured to prove, that that covenant included only *one seed*, viz. the spiritual ; that all its promises, both temporal and spiritual, were made only to that *one seed* ; and that circumcision was connected with this mixt view of the covenant, *as a whole*, signifying to them all the same things, viz. the spiritual blessings of justification and sanctification, &c.

To affirm, that not only the spiritual and eternal, but also all the *temporal* blessings were promised only to *one seed*, viz. the spiritual, is to deny that the greater part of Abraham's natural posterity had any interest in the temporal blessings. His proof for this is Gal. iii. 16. where the apostle is not speaking of temporal, but only of spiritual blessings, and of these as promised in the first place to Abraham's *one seed*, which is CHRIST, in whom all the spiritual seed inherit them ; for they are *blessed in him*. He connects circumcision with his view of the covenant as a whole, and considers it only as a sign or seal of *spiritual blessings* to Abraham and all his *believing seed* : But what did it seal to all the male-infants of Abraham's seed, for whom it was expressly appointed, Gen. xvii. 10 ? Were they all, or even the greater part of them, Abraham's spiritual seed ? Did none of Abraham's seed inherit the promise

of the land of Canaan and its temporal blessings, but those of them who believed to the saving of the soul?

I have already shown that there were different covenants made with Abraham, as appears from the Mosaic history, from the apostle's speaking of them in the plural, Rom. ix. 4. Eph. ii. 12. and from the two very different covenants which sprung from them, viz. the old and the new. The first promise made to Abram Gen. xii. 3. is termed "the COVENANT which was confirmed before of God in Christ," Gal. iii. 17. and contained a promise of blessing *all nations*, i. e. all Abraham's spiritual or believing seed of Jews and Gentiles. But the covenant of circumcision did not include the Gentiles, but was a peculiar covenant with the natural posterity of Abraham, who were to receive the token of it in their flesh in infancy, as a people separated to God from all others, and of whom Messiah was to spring. Christian baptism, therefore, is not founded on the covenant of circumcision which was peculiar to the natural seed of Abraham; but on that covenant which extends the blessing of Abraham to his spiritual seed of all nations: Accordingly, when that ancient covenant of promise came to be actually ratified in the blood of Christ, the peculiar covenant of circumcision with the fleshly seed of Abraham was set aside, and baptism was appointed to be administered to all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who appeared to be his spiritual seed by faith in Christ, but to none else. Mr. W. remarks,

"1. That there is no absurdity in *the thing itself*—the administering an ordinance of spiritual import to children." P. 72.

It is certain there can be no absurdity in any thing which the Lord appoints, whether we can see the rea-



son and propriety of it or not. It was the command of God that every male-infant of Abraham's seed should be circumcised at eight days old. This constituted their *right* to it, and was the *warrant* for administering it to them; and it was no part of the qualification, or description of its subjects, that they should understand its mystical import, nor was it suspended upon this: But the case is altogether different with respect to baptism, which is appointed only for such as are first taught and believe the gospel, which is the same as to understand its import. Therefore to administer it to infants, is equally absurd as to affirm, that infants believe, or are made disciples; nay, it is worse, it is to alter and misapply that sacred institution. He observes,

“ 2. That circumcision and baptism *signify* or *represent* the same things; with this difference, that the former seems to have contained in its import, a notification of Messiah *as to come*, which, of course, at his coming, ceased to be necessary. And this, as I formerly observed, furnishes a good reason for the substitution of another rite in its place.” P. 73.

But if circumcision literally signified the *same things* as baptism does, I can see no reason for substituting baptism in its place; for what is there in the nature of the rite of circumcision, or in cutting off the foreskin, which *seems* more fitly to notify Christ *as to come*, than *as having already come*? If it signified simply the shedding of the blood of Messiah, might it not represent this as well *after* as *before* his coming? If, like baptism, it represented only the taking away of the guilt and pollution of sin by the blood and Spirit of Christ, or the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, how has the *coming* of Christ made it unfit to re-

present these things any longer? The fact is, circumcision differs essentially from baptism in many important respects; and therefore seems altogether unfit to be continued under the gospel. To mention some of these differences:

1. Circumcision was appointed for all the male-seed of Abraham without exception, and even for slaves, who were his property, by being born in his house, or bought with his money, Gen. xvii. 10—15. But baptism is appointed for none upon any such accounts, but for those only who believe, or appear personally to be the spiritual seed of Abraham by faith in Christ Jesus, Mark xvi. 16. Acts viii. 12, 36, 37. Gal. iii. 7, 9, 26, 27.—2. Circumcision belonged to a peculiar covenant with the natural posterity of Abraham. It was a token of that covenant in their flesh; a mark of their national distinction and separation from all other people; and hence they are denominated *the circumcision*, Rom. iv. 9. But baptism belongs to the new covenant, which hath set aside the distinction of Jew and Gentile, and extends the spiritual blessing of Abraham to his spiritual seed of all nations, Matth. xxviii. 19. Rom. iii. 29, 30. chap. x. 12, 13. Gal. iii. 13, 14.—3. Circumcision was restricted to males, Gen. xvii. 10. But baptism is to be administered to all who believe, both men and women, Acts viii. 12. for male and female are all one in Christ, Gal. iii. 28.—4. Circumcision was annexed to the grant of the earthly inheritance, Gen. xvii. 8. and was a token of heirship or of interest in those temporal blessings which were promised to Abraham and his natural seed. But baptism has no respect to any thing of a secular or temporal nature, but represents or confirms to believers the spiritual, heavenly, and eternal blessings of the

new covenant, answerable to the nature of Christ's kingdom, which is not of this world.—5. Circumcision laid the subjects of it under an obligation to conform to the whole system of Judaism as contained in the Mosaic law, Gal. v. 3. which left all those who sought to be justified by it under the curse, chap. iii. 10. But baptism represents the believer's freedom from that yoke of bondage, Col. ii. 12—15. his deliverance from the curse, and his justification by faith in Christ as the end of the law for righteousness; while it engages him to die unto sin, and walk in newness of life, as being under law to Christ, Acts ii. 38. chap. xxii. 16. 1 Pet. iii. 21. Rom. vi. 3—15. Gal. iii. 27.

Though circumcision had a secondary, hidden, or mystical sense, even as the earthly inheritance, and all the other types had, which were a shadow of good things to come; yet its proper, literal, and direct sense was not the same with that of baptism; for the apostle classes it with the *latter*, Rom. ii. 27, 29. and with the *flesh*, Gal. iii. 3. chap. vi. 12, 13. with which baptism has no concern, but belongs entirely to the *spirit*, representing simply and directly the spiritual blessings of the new covenant as they are clearly revealed in the gospel. Those who affirm that circumcision and baptism signify the same thing, may with equal propriety affirm, that because the paschal lamb typified Christ, therefore it signified the same thing to the Israelites that the Lord's Supper does to us, which is contrary to the express explanation of their different significations. See Exod. xii. 24—28. and 1 Cor. xi. 23, 27. Further, he says,

“3. If the Abrahamic covenant was confirmed before of God in Christ, and is the everlasting covenant, under which we at present are;—if circumcision, the sign and seal of this covenant of old, was administered by



God's command to the children of those who professed the faith of this covenant, I ask, where is any change in its constitution, in this respect, pointed out?—When were children excluded, and by what law? While there is abundant evidence of a change as to the sign, there seems to be none of a change, either in the thing signified by it, or in the extent of its application." P. 73, 74.

I have repeatedly shown, that the covenant which was confirmed of God in Christ four hundred and thirty years before the law, was not the covenant of circumcision—That the circumcision of infants was not a seal of the everlasting covenant under which we at present are; but the token of a peculiar covenant with the fleshly seed of Abraham, which is now done away. As to the question, "Where is any change in its constitution, in this respect, pointed out?" I answer, that though the original promise made to Abraham of blessing all nations in his seed, which is Christ, has undergone no change, but was fulfilled in the coming of the promised Seed; yet the covenant of circumcision, which included all Abraham's fleshly seed indiscriminately as such, is not merely *changed* in its constitution, but *wholly set aside*: and this is clearly pointed out, 1. By the *abrogation of circumcision* itself, which was the token of that covenant, and could not be dispensed with by any while that covenant stood, without breaking God's covenant, and being cut off from his people, Gen. xvii. 14. Exod. iv. 24—27. for circumcision and the covenant to which it belonged stood or fell together. That baptism was substituted *in the place* of circumcision, as a seal of the *same* covenant, is a groundless conjecture; for, besides that the believing Jews were allowed to practise both for a considerable

time, we no where find the apostles bringing it forward as an argument for setting aside circumcision, that baptism was substituted in its place; which doubtless they would have done in their disputes with the Jewish zealots, had they viewed it in that light.—2. That the covenant of circumcision itself was set aside, is also evident from its *promises*. In that covenant God stipulated that he would be the God of Abraham's natural seed, and that he would give them the land of Canaan for an inheritance, Gen. xvii. 8. This he actually fulfilled to them as a nation, during the date of the typical economy. But now their peculiar national relation to God is dissolved, their title to the earthly possession vacated, and they have been long ago disinherited and cast out of that land: Therefore the covenant itself, by which they were entitled to these peculiar privileges, must have come to an end.—3. As that covenant was made with Abraham's *fleshly seed*, so their carnal descent from Abraham, entitled them to the privileges of it: But under the gospel every claim upon that ground is rejected, Matth. iii. 9. The apostles knew, or esteemed, no man a subject of Christ's kingdom, according to his fleshly descent from Abraham, but as being a new creature, 1 Cor. v. 16, 17. and our Lord says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. This shows that the covenant of circumcision with the fleshly seed of Abraham has no place under the new covenant; "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love," or "a new creature," Gal. v. 6. chap. vi. 15.

With respect to his other question, viz. "*When were children excluded, and by what law?*" He should have mentioned expressly from what it is that the

Baptists hold them as excluded. Is it from an interest in the original promise made to Abraham of blessing all nations in his Seed? This is far from being their sentiment: On the contrary, they believe that all elect infants are interested in that promise, whether they are the children of believing or unbelieving parents, and are baptized or unbaptized; which is more than many Pœdobaptists will admit. Or does he mean, that the Baptists exclude children from an interest in the covenant of circumcision? This is only what the Pœdobaptists themselves do in effect; for whilst they assert the entail of that covenant on their children, they administer circumcision to none of them, though it be the only token of that covenant which God hath appointed, and though the neglect of it is expressly declared to be the breaking of that covenant, and to cut them off from any interest in it, Gen. xvii. 14. There is ground to apprehend, that if the covenant of circumcision were still in force, many of those who now strenuously contend for it, would not choose to adhere to it, *as a whole*, but would find out abundance of arguments for changing its painful and bloody rite into something more easy and delicate; even as they have not scrupled to change baptism into sprinkling, though the temptation was not so strong.

But I suppose Mr. W's question relates to baptism, and that he means to ask, "*When* were infants excluded from baptism, and by what law?" To this it might be sufficient to answer, that it is time enough, in all reason, to show *when* they were excluded from it, when it has first been proved from scripture that they were *ever* admitted to it, or that it was *ever* commanded to be administered to them: Yet it may further be ob-



served, that if infants are not mentioned in the institution of baptism, or in the commission to baptize—if the characters by which its subjects are expressly described, will not apply to infants—and if, in the whole scripture account of its administration, we find not a single instance of any infant being admitted to baptism; this amounts to a sufficient exclusion of them from that positive institution. To this I may add, that they are excluded by the *law* which forbids adding to, or diminishing from the word of God, and teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. But what follows demands attention.

“I now proceed,” says he, “to call your attention a little to POSITIVE PROOF. I have said, that there does not seem to be any express evidence of a change, as to the extent of the application of the sign of the covenant; let us now consider, whether there is not to be found, both in the prophecies which refer to New Testament times, and in the New Testament itself, DIRECT EVIDENCE of the contrary; that matters remain, in this respect, on their ancient footing.” P. 75.

*Positive proof!—direct evidence!* Of what? That as to the extent of the application of the sign of the covenant, matters remain on their ancient footing. That is, all the infants of New Testament believers are to be baptized on the same footing on which all the male infants of ancient Israel were circumcised. If he can produce such proof and evidence of this as he here proposes, it will put an end to the controversy; for I hope that the Baptists will not be so obstinate as to reject positive proof and direct evidence when it is laid before them. It is what they have been always calling for, but which no Pœdobaptist has hitherto been able

to produce, and many of them do not so much as pretend to do it.

His first positive proof is from Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. "And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, *and of their children after them*; and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good." Now, allowing his explanation of this promise (which in some particulars might be justly disputed) we want positive proof that *their children* here mentioned signify *their infant children*; for that is not the most ordinary sense of the word in scripture, though it is the only sense that relates to the point in hand. Next, we want direct evidence, that the *good* promised to them *and their children after them* includes their baptism while infants; or before they can give any evidence of their believing the gospel.

To the same purpose he adduces Deut. xxx. 6. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, *and the heart of thy seed*, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," &c. This he connects with the foregoing passage as referring to gospel times, and says, "It seems to contain an intimation, that the same connection should then continue between the people of God, and their offspring, which had existed from the days of Abraham." P. 76.

The connection which subsisted between Abraham and his natural seed, the nation of Israel, entitled them to the fleshly circumcision in infancy; yet, notwithstanding this connection and circumcision, the greater part of them turned out to be "stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears," Acts vii. 51. And if christian baptism proceeds on the ground of the *same connection*, instead of a spiritual connection in the

faith, there is little reason to expect that the subjects of it in general will turn out much better than the natural seed of believing Abraham did. Their being the natural seed of believers, is no proper criterion by which to distinguish the children of God from the world. The pious example and religious instruction of their parents may be blessed to the conversion of many of them, and so may the preaching of the gospel be blessed to the conversion of the children of unbelievers; and when this appears, both of them ought to be baptized; but this proceeds altogether upon a different ground from the connection pleaded for. It is said that God hath promised to circumcise the heart of the natural seed of believers. Be it so: whenever this appears to take place in any instance, no Baptist will object to their baptism. But they cannot receive this as *positive proof*, that *all* the natural seed of believers either are or will be circumcised in heart, or that *any* of them should be baptized previous to the visible evidence that they are thus circumcised.

Another passage which he brings forward as direct evidence, is Isa. lxxv. 23. "They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are *the seed of the blessed of the Lord and their offspring with them.*" Which he explains thus: "The *seed of the blessed of the Lord*, i. e. the *spiritual seed* of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.—And *their offspring with them*, i. e. connected with them in the promise of God's covenant, and partaking with them of his blessing." P. 77.

If by God's covenant he means the new covenant, and that their offspring partake with them in its blessings, then he must consider them also as the *spiritual seed*. He does not, however, venture to affirm this



universally, though the consistency of his argument requires it, but says, "The primary reference of the promise to the fleshly seed of believers, never implied *the certain salvation of all their children.*" Well then, let us suppose that this promise implies, that *many* of the children of believers, perhaps a *greater proportion* of them than of other children, shall certainly be saved; what positive proof or direct evidence does this afford, that *all* of them, or indeed, *any* of them, should be baptized in their infancy? Indeed there does not appear to me, from all he has advanced, the least colour of proof for this.

I have now followed Mr. W. throughout his arguments for infant-baptism, drawn from the covenant of circumcision and other passages of the Old Testament, which seem to be his main fort. He next proceeds to consider the evidence that appears in the New. But first he cautions us against imagining that the New Testament is so clear and express upon this subject as to be properly understood, unless we keep in view what he has advanced from the Old. His words are,

"It appears to be of the *last importance*, in interpreting the New Testament, that we should understand and attend carefully to the state of things previous to it. The reason is obvious. The language of the New Testament, we should naturally expect to be, in some measure, *modified* by these existing circumstances; and the import of a variety of the expressions employed, we shall be unable rightly to appreciate, without taking into view a reference to what already existed, and was known; and the existence and knowledge of which rendered greater enlargement and minuteness unnecessary. Bearing *this remark* in mind, along with the preceding passages of the Old Testa-

ment which relate to gospel times, let us consider a little the evidence that appears in the New." P. 78.

There are, indeed, many references and allusions in the New Testament to the state of things under the Old : but it seldom refers us to the Old Testament as a key to its own meaning. Both Testaments mutually throw light on each other, but not to an equal degree. The Old Testament revelation is compared to a light shining in a dark place, and is represented as veiled in a great measure under figures and shadows : while the New Testament revelation is held forth without a veil in great plainness of speech, and is represented as greatly excelling the former in point of light and clearness, with respect to every thing which relates to the faith and duty of christians ; nay, it is the very explanation of the Old Testament, by which its spirit and mystical sense is laid open. But Mr. W. seems to reverse this. He thinks that it is of the *last importance*, in interpreting the New Testament, that we should understand and attend carefully to the state of things previous to it ; because, he imagines, the New Testament does not enlarge on things with such minuteness as to make them sufficiently understood, but refers us to the Old Testament for an explanation of its sense, without which we should be unable rightly to appreciate the import of its expressions.

If he means to apply this remark to the New Testament in general, he must view it as being, by itself, a very imperfect revelation ; but if he means it only of certain expressions, or of some allusions and references to the previous state of things under the Jewish economy, how comes he to introduce such a remark on the subject of baptism, and to represent it as of the last importance in interpreting the doctrine of

the New Testament on that head? Do we ever find either Christ or his apostles referring us to the Old Testament for an explanation of that ordinance? Indeed, it would be very strange if they did, as there is no such thing to be found there. As to the prophetic passages which relate to gospel times, these are best explained by the New Testament itself, and by the scripture historical facts in which they began to be accomplished. We have no occasion, therefore, to bear his remark in mind when consulting the New Testament as to the proper subjects of baptism. I am persuaded that if Mr. W. could have found the baptism of infants either commanded or exemplified in all the New Testament, he would have spared this remark; nay, I am confident that, on any other subject but this, he would not differ much from me as to the superior clearness of the New Testament revelation.

If we enter upon the consideration of the New Testament evidence on this head, with a preconceived opinion, that though infant-baptism be not mentioned there, yet it must certainly be implied, that very opinion, while it preoccupies the mind, disqualifies us for judging of the evidence; for, in that case, we do not consult the New Testament with a view to be determined by it, or to rest in its decision, but to confirm the opinion which we have already adopted. So Mr. W. having formed his opinion upon what he conceives to have been the state of things under the Old Testament, particularly with respect to the covenant of circumcision, and the connection of the children with their parents in the national blessings of that covenant, he transfers these ideas into the New Testament state of things, and explains the passages relating to baptism accordingly: nay, he even explains them by the



ideas to which the Jews had been previously habituated. Thus on Acts ii. 38, 39, he says,

“ Peter addressed Jews. Their minds were habituated to the idea of the connection of their children with themselves, in the promise of the covenant. It was an idea deeply rooted in their hearts. How then would they understand the apostle's words? Certainly in a sense consistent with their previous views, as intimating the *continuance* of the same connection.” P. 81.

According to this, the apostle, it seems, gave them no new information on this subject, but only confirmed them in their former opinion. Mr. W. therefore must suppose, that when Peter says, the promise of the Spirit is “even to as many as the Lord our God shall call,” he thought it superfluous to add, *together with their infant children*, because the Jews needed no such information. And when Luke says, “Then they that gladly received his (Peter's) word were baptized,” ver. 41. he thought it needless to add, *with their infants*, for the same reason. So likewise when he informs us, that when the Samaritans believed Philip, “they were baptized both men and women,” Acts viii. 12, he had no occasion to mention the baptism of their infant children; because, it seems, that was a thing of course, and always to be taken for granted. Thus he may easily assign a reason why the baptism of infants is never once mentioned in all the New Testament, by supposing it to be previously so well understood, especially by the Jews, that there was no occasion to take any notice of it; though, I own, he may have some difficulty in applying this reasoning to Gentile converts, as the greater part of them had no previous knowledge of Jewish principles.

The whole of his reasoning from the state of things under the Jewish constitution, from scripture prophecies relating to gospel times, and from the previous opinions of the Jews (by all which he would have us to interpret the plain passages in the New Testament on this subject, and supply their deficiencies,) is so far from amounting to positive proof, or direct evidence, that it does not appear to me to carry any evidence at all in it of what he wishes to establish. I am of opinion, that by the same kind of reasoning, it might with equal plausibility be proved, that the kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of this world. It might be argued, That though the kingdom of ancient Israel was a worldly kingdom, including their carnal seed, it was the kingdom of God : That the prophecies relating to the kingdom of Messiah frequently represent it as a worldly monarchy, like the kingdom of Israel under the reigns of David and Solomon : That the Jews in general interpreted these prophecies of a worldly kingdom ; their minds were habituated to this idea, and it was an idea deeply rooted in their hearts : They must therefore have understood John the Baptist, or Christ and his apostles, when preaching that kingdom, in a sense consistent with their previous views, as intimating a *continuance* of the same worldly kingdom as formerly, but now to be restored to Israel, and raised to a higher pitch of worldly power and prosperity than ever.

Now, if what Mr. W. has stated proves that the connection of parents and children has the same place in the kingdom of Christ, that it had in the worldly kingdom of the Jews ; then what I have just now stated will also prove, that the kingdom of Christ is of a worldly nature ; for such was the opinion the Jews

had of it, and such it must be in reality, if it includes all the natural seed of believers. It may be said, that Christ expressly declares, "My kingdom is not of this world—now is my kingdom not from hence." True, but he has as expressly described his subjects; "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice," John xviii. 36, 37. And if men can get rid of this description of his subjects by reasoning from the covenant with the natural posterity of believing Abraham, they may also get rid of the account he gives of his kingdom, by arguments drawn from the worldly kingdom of Israel. Nor is this an ideal supposition; it has been sufficiently verified in the history of what is called *the Christian church*. It has been said by Independent Pædobaptists, that though they baptize the children of believers, yet they admit none of them into church communion but upon a profession of their faith: But this only shows their inconsistency; for, according to the scriptures, none have a right to baptism who do not previously profess the faith, and are not fit to be the *same day* added to a christian church, and to continue in the breaking of bread. Acts ii. 41—43.

Having made some remarks on Mr. W's key for interpreting the New Testament on the subject of baptism, I think it needless to follow him in his use of that key in explaining the different passages; and the rather, as I have repeatedly handled these passages elsewhere.\* I shall therefore conclude with a few short remarks on what remains.

He blames the Baptists for totally disannulling the connection between parents and their children. By this he cannot intend their *natural* connection, or the

\* See M'Lean's Works, vol. i. and ii.



duties arising from it. He must therefore mean a *supernatural* or *spiritual* connection. But what spiritual connection have children with their believing parents, if they are not elect or believing children? And if they are, wherein does their spiritual connection with their parents differ from that which subsists between the whole elect of God, who are all connected with each other by virtue of their union with Christ, their common head? If he means any other spiritual connection besides this, it must be something peculiar to the natural relation, which, unless it be the benefit of parental instruction, I confess I do not understand. It is a fact which cannot be denied, that when God at first visited the nations to take out of them a people for his name, the children of unbelieving idolaters were saved through faith in Christ, whilst the children of believing Abraham were rejected through unbelief. I cannot therefore see that the children of believers are saved in any other way, or upon any other ground, than the children of unbelievers are; or that they have any hereditary right to salvation, by virtue of their connection with believing parents, more than other children have. It appears to me, that they must be saved entirely of sovereign free grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, and that upon the same footing with others; and I am of opinion that to instil other sentiments into their minds must have a very pernicious effect, so far as they put any confidence in them.

As to the instances of baptizing *households*, he does not find himself at all concerned about proving to a certainty, that there were infant children in any of the families referred to; though he endeavours in a large note to establish that point as much as he can, p. 84—87. which shows, at least, some concern about it.

For my own part, I never absolutely denied that there might be infants in these houses. The argument does not hinge upon this, but upon the accounts given of all those who were baptized, as being altogether inapplicable to mere infants. But Mr. W. places the strength of his argument from these houses, in the connection which existed between parents and children in the Jewish church; in Gentile proselytes being received into that church *by families or households*; and in some expressions in the New Testament which he imagines exactly correspond to the Old Testament state of things, such as those in Luke xix. 9 Acts xvi. 15, 31, 33. 1 Cor. i. 16. So that he explains these passages, not by the doctrine of the New Testament, or the history of facts recorded there, but by "connecting them with *previous circumstances and prevalent ideas*," which, he thinks, rendered it *needless* to be very minute in specifying particulars, p. 84. This manner of reasoning, I think, after what I have already said, renders it equally *needless* for me to make any further reply. Only I would ask, whether Mr. W. receives proselytes into the full communion of his church *by families or households* as the Jews did, and upon the same grounds?

He thinks "that baptism is denominated by the apostle, in Col. ii. 11, 12, the *circumcision of Christ*—because otherwise, there is an awkward unmeaning tautology; the circumcision made without hands, and the circumcision of Christ being made of the same import; as if he had said—ye are circumcised with the circumcision of the heart, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of the heart," &c. P. 87, 88.

In this method he might convert many hundred pas-

sages of scripture into what he calls *awkward* and *unmeaning* tautologies. But would it not be a more decent treatment of the passage, as well as more agreeable to the sense, to understand the apostle as saying, that they were circumcised without hands, by the spiritual circumcision of Christ, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh? Nothing can be plainer than that the *circumcision made without hands* is here termed the *circumcision of Christ*. But the ordinance of baptism is not administered without hands, nor does it put off the body of the sins of the flesh, though it is the sign of it. Mr. W's design in explaining this passage of baptism, is to show, that baptism is substituted in the place of circumcision. I have no objection to the sentiment, that these two ordinances bear some general analogy to each other, if it is stated thus, That as, under the Old Testament, circumcision belonged to all the *natural seed* of Abraham, who were known to be such in infancy by their fleshly birth; so, under the New Testament, baptism belongs to all the *spiritual seed* of Abraham by faith in Christ, who are known to be such by their profession of that faith. His last argument is from church history:

"To this connected chain of particulars I now add, as being, to my own mind, an *invincible confirmation* of the matter of fact, that infant baptism was practised in the time of the apostles; the account we have in the history of the church of the prevalence of this practice in the times *immediately* following." And he cites Mr. Walker's words, that "We have decisive historical proof, that little more than a hundred years after the death of the apostles, paedobaptism was of *general practice* in all the churches." P. 90, 91.

Some of the apostles lived at least till the year of



Christ 97, so that "a little more than a hundred years after that" brings it down to the latter end of the second century or beginning of the third, at which time it is admitted that we have the first express mention of infant-baptism by Tertullian, though not in the way of approbation. But this was not the time *immediately* following the apostles' days; and to affirm, that, at that time, it was of *general practice* in all the churches, is not only a gratuitous assertion, but contrary to plain historical facts. That infant-baptism was practised by some about the end of the second century, appears from Tertullian's opposition to it; but had it been of *general practice* in all the churches, what occasion was there for Cyprian and sixty-six bishops to meet, about the middle of the third century, to give it the sanction of a council? We have evidence that it was not *universally* practised even in the fourth and fifth centuries; Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Nectarius, bishop of Constantinople, Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, &c. though all born of christian parents, were not baptized till they arrived at an adult state. And from such instances we may justly presume, that there were many more who were not baptized in infancy, though sprung from christian parents. It is said, that unless infant-baptism had been practised from the beginning, it could not afterwards have been introduced without opposition or noise. We find that Tertullian opposed it, and it also appears that Boniface, bishop of Thessalonica, in his letter to Augustine, seems to be far from approving either of infant-baptism or the business of sponsors. But granting that we had no account of any opposition being made to it, it does not follow that it must have been practised from the beginning. The communion of infants in the Lord's

Supper was as early introduced, and as extensively practised for six hundred years, as their baptism was, and, I may add, with as much reason; yet we read of no opposition made to it; was it therefore practised from the beginning? Many superstitious inventions began very early to creep into the church, and many more were afterwards added both by the Greek and Roman churches; but must every one of them to whose introduction we read of no opposition, be considered as of divine institution? He says, "There are allusions to infant-baptism previous to the time" of Tertullian, p. 93. But no man can show, with any certainty, that the figurative expressions of Irenæus, or of Clemens of Alexandria, have the least allusion to infant-baptism. I shall only add, that some of the most learned Pædobaptist writers, and who were well acquainted with church history, have given it as their firm opinion, That the two first centuries either knew nothing at all, or very little, of infant-baptism, and that Tertullian is the first that mentions it.\*

Before I conclude I cannot help remarking, That though Mr. W. in order to establish infant-baptism, leads us back to the xvii. of Genesis, and carries us down through the state of things under the Old Testament, by the help of which he endeavours to explain some passages in the New; yet throughout the whole of his connected chain of particulars, he never takes the least notice of Christ's commission to his apostles on this subject, excepting once that he barely mentions it: Whether it was that it did not occur to him, or

\* Mr. Booth has collected a number of quotations to this purpose from Pædobaptist writers in his *Pædobaptism Examined*. Vol. ii. chap. ii.

that he thought it was not to his purpose, I will not take it upon me to say ; but one would naturally think, that, on the subject of baptism, it could scarcely escape him. He indeed says, " I have left unnoticed a number of the smaller branches of the argument." But surely he cannot rank the Commission among these, as it is the very law and rule of that ordinance. I hope that, should he ever write upon the subject again, he will take this law of the institution under his consideration, and explain it (if he thinks it needs explanation) not by the Old Testament, but by the doctrine and practice of the inspired apostles to whom it was immediately delivered, and who were made able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit. I am persuaded that, in this method, he would find more satisfaction to his own mind than in all the circuitous arguments he has advanced, to prove what is nowhere mentioned in all the word of God.

As to what he says in his APPENDIX respecting what is called *the mode of baptism*, I need make no reply, as I have sufficiently handled that point elsewhere ; and especially as I find nothing in his Appendix that in the least invalidates what I have advanced. He thinks that, while the scriptures seem to place the *import* of the ordinance in the *nature of the element* employed ; it is by the Baptists placed *principally*, and by some of them, indeed, almost *exclusively*, in the *mode* in which the element is used. P. 127. But this is a mistake ; for the Baptists do not place the *import* of the ordinance, either principally or exclusively, nor indeed at all, in the *mode* in which the element is used ; but in the *spiritual thing signified* by that mode of applying water which Christ hath expressly enjoined, viz. *baptizing* or *immersing* disciples in it ; and



which therefore cannot be altered, without altering his institution. They lay no greater stress on the *mode* of baptizing than they do on the *mode* of receiving the Lord's Supper, which I am persuaded Mr. W. would not consider as properly received without *eating* and *drinking*; nay, I am confident that he would not look upon it as received at all without this. Some affirm that baptism may be administered either by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, these being only different modes of the same ordinance; but where do we find in all the word of God any solemn positive institution left so vague as this as to its mode? *Immersion* is not a mode of baptism, but the very thing itself. *Pouring* or *sprinkling* are words never used in scripture in relation to baptism. The generality of Pœdobaptists, who have considered this subject, freely admit, that immersion was the primitive manner of administering this ordinance; and that it was what our Lord enjoined, and what his apostles practised. Mr. W. thinks he has an *inviolable confirmation* of infant-baptism, as a matter of fact, from church history; let us see then what account it gives of immersion and sprinkling.

Some time after the death of the apostles, when baptism came to be considered as absolutely necessary to salvation, the sick who were desirous of baptism, that they might not die without it, were indulged with sprinkling on their beds instead of immersion. This, from the necessity of the case, was considered by some to be equally effectual with their immersion in the baptismal font; but others were of a different opinion, and considered it as imperfect. With this exception, immersion continued to be the universal practice in all the churches. In the Greek church it has continued from the beginning unto this day. The

church of Rome retained it for thirteen centuries, and then sprinkling was introduced into common use first in France, and afterwards into other popish countries. In England sprinkling commenced in the time of Queen Elizabeth, but came not into common practice till the reign of James I. The Westminster Assembly of Divines completed this innovation, by converting the baptismal font into a bason, which admits of no other baptism but that of the clergymen's fingers. This, I am informed, was the first time that ever that implement was used (unless, perhaps, in a case of necessity) either by Papists, or any other denomination of christians whatever. These are facts which are recorded in church history, and fully admitted by the most intelligent Pœdobaptists, many of whom highly disapprove of the alteration of immersion into sprinkling or pouring.

The reasons assigned for this alteration of Christ's institution are, coldness of climate—tenderness of infants—the efficacy of the ordinance not depending on its form—God will have mercy and not sacrifice—the power of the church to alter ceremonial appointments—sprinkling more easy, safe, convenient, decent, and modest than immersion, &c. To admit that immersion was the primitive form of the institution, and yet to assign such reasons for altering it, is, in fact, to impeach the Divine Lawgiver himself, as if he were deficient in wisdom, mercifulness, and propriety in his appointments.

Mr. W. thinks it in the highest degree *improbable* that immersion was ever used in the apostle's days, and he musters up a catalogue of the various inconveniencies and troubles which, he conjectures, would have attended such a practice, and so thinks it incon-

sistent with Christ's yoke, *which is easy*. Such observations require no answer when the question respects an institution of Christ. Is there nothing in Christ's yoke so *uneasy* to flesh and blood as immersion? But Mr. W. wishes to cut deep on this subject, and therefore says, "It must unquestionably be attended with risk to the health;" and concludes by observing, "That the practice of immersion, in many of its occurrences, cannot but be inconsistent with a due regard to the feelings of delicacy and decorum. In this light, indeed, I look upon the baptism of females, in almost *every instance*, in the manner in which it is practised, by persons of the other sex, in presence of a mixed company of spectators. But there are particular cases, not merely supposable, but *actually* and *necessarily occurring*, in which these feelings must be severely wounded indeed." P. 144, 145.

If the Baptists pay no due regard to the feelings of delicacy and decorum, but wound them severely in their manner of baptizing the female sex, they must be a people who are lost, in a great measure, to all sense of shame. It is well known that insinuations and aspersions of this kind will have more weight with many than the clearest scripture evidence in favour of immersion. To reproach the Baptists with indecency is but a small matter; but to represent this indecency as *inseparably* connected with immersion, is in fact, (whatever he may think of it) to throw a slur upon the sacred institution of Christ. And if he view immersion in such a dangerous and shameful point of light, what must he think of circumcision, upon which he founds his main plea for infant-baptism? Few Pœdobaptist writers, who have considered this subject, have hitherto ventured to stake the credit of their judgment and in-



tegrity on a denial that immersion was the original institution. They, in general, only plead, that sprinkling is more safe and convenient, and may answer the design of the ordinance equally well. I am therefore obliged in charity to suppose, that Mr. W. is persuaded to the highest degree of *absolute certainty*, that no such thing as immersion was ever instituted by Christ, or practised either by John the Baptist or the apostles ; for, upon any other supposition I cannot reconcile his reproachful manner of treating it with the opinion which I ever wish to retain of him. I give him great credit for his abilities, and think he has put as plausible a face upon infant-baptism, as an untenable cause could possibly admit. And though he has grounded his arguments chiefly on the principles of the Jewish constitution ; yet I am persuaded, that, if infant-baptism were out of view, he would not pursue the same strain of doctrine on any other subject.

# **LETTERS**

ADDRESSED TO

**MR. JOHN GLAS,**

IN ANSWER TO HIS

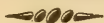
**DISSERTATION ON INFANT-BAPTISM.**

*Written in the year 1776.*





## PREFACE.



**TO** assign reasons, or make an apology for publishing the following letters, is altogether needless. If I have truth on my side, the importance of the subject, and the general inattention paid to it, especially in Scotland, will sufficiently justify me : if I have not, all apologies are vain.

It is indeed a pretty common observation, that little benefit or edification results from religious controversies. This is held as an indisputable maxim by those who are settled on their lees, and wish not to be disturbed ; whose cool indifferency indicates their having little at stake, or whose unlimited charity is equally courteous to truth and error ; yet I cannot be persuaded that this sage maxim admits of no exception. The most important revolution that

ever happened in the world, was brought about by means of controversy, disputes and contention\* ; and afterwards, when Antichrist had slain the witnesses, quashed the controversy, and cursed all around him into implicit faith, these horrid chains of darkness were again burst asunder by a free enquiry into the scriptures, and a contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

But whatever may be said of controversy, it may be presumed, that the person who can stand neutral in all religious disputes, must either have no creed at all, or hold it very cheap.

As the controversy about baptism has been agitated occasionally in other parts of the world for these fifteen centuries past, I have not the vanity to imagine that anything advanced in the following letters will finally decide the matter ; for I am fully persuaded, that there are other principles of opposition to truth in human nature than simple ignorance.

\* Acts ix. 32. xvii. 17. and xix. 8, 9.

A publication in behalf of the scripture ordinance of baptism, I believe, is a perfect novelty in Scotland. Many tracts have been published on the other side of the question in this country, which one would think were altogether needless, as hitherto there was no appearance of opposition. This however may be accounted for, if we may suppose that these authors were apprehensive of some defect in the scripture evidence for infant-baptism, and found it necessary to supply that defect by argument, though a little reflection might have convinced them that the only evidence of a positive institution is the clear expressed will of the institutor.

My present controversy is chiefly with INDEPENDENTS, who profess to believe, That Christ's kingdom is not of this world ; and that the carnal birth does not distinguish his subjects, nor entitle to spiritual privileges : these especially will discern the propriety of the arguments, and feel their weight.

As for the national church, I have little quarrel with her on this head, it being equally



reasonable that the children of the flesh should be counted for the seed, as that a nation of this world should be counted a visible church of Christ. For whilst it is supposed, that the kingdoms of this world, which assume the name CHRISTIAN, do, in some sense, succeed the Jewish Theocracy, and are interested in the covenant of circumcision, it will be hard to convince them, that the command to circumcise Jewish infants does not equally warrant the baptizing of theirs.

I hope the reader will not satisfy himself with carping at occasional inadvertencies, but candidly consider the scope and force of the arguments, and especially the scriptures adduced in support of them.

If what I have advanced in these Letters have a tendency to free any of the subjects of Christ from human inventions, and rouse their attention to the unerring rule, my end is gained.

*Glasgow, 1766.*

## LETTER I.

SIR,

IT is now a considerable time since I read and considered your excellent Treatise, entitled, *The TESTIMONY of the KING of MARTYRS, &c.* which I take to be a most judicious and scriptural illustration of our Lord's good confession, which he witnessed before Pontius Pilate concerning his kingdom, as distinguished from the Jewish Theocracy, the kingdoms of this world, and the false churches that now bear that form. Holding the analogy betwixt type and antitype in your eye, the scripture evidence beams in upon you from every quarter to support the main point; whilst you, unshackled by human systems, admit it in its genuine and simple meaning.

The reading of this excellent treatise gave me vast satisfaction, and prepossessed me with a favourable bias in behalf of your other writings: supposing you still to pursue the principles upon which you set out, I was unwilling to admit any such sense of your words as seemed to deviate from them.

Thus you may see with what favourable impressions I proceeded to peruse the rest of your works; and indeed, I was not disappointed in many \* of your tracts, which contain a plain and scriptural view of the doctrine, order, and worship of the apostolic churches, till I arrived at your third volume, where I found a piece

\* I say, *many*, because there are several things exceptionable, and particularly a little tract in the second volume, entitled, *Salvation to a Believer's House*.

on *Catholic Charity*, and a letter entitled, *The Rule of Forbearance Defended*, in both which you seem to me to confine the apostolic directions respecting forbearance, to the peculiar disputes that arose betwixt the Jews and Gentiles about the lawfulness of meats and days.

When I compared this with what you had advanced before on that head, in the *Testimony of the King of Martyrs*, \* I could not but observe a manifest inconsistency betwixt them. However, I was unwilling to judge rashly in this affair, thinking it unlikely you should publish contradictory principles in one and the same edition of your works.

But, proceeding to your fourth volume, † I found *A Dissertation on Infant-baptism*, which I considered with care and attention; and the rather, as I was never fully satisfied with any thing I had formerly read on that subject; and being desirous of further light into it, I had some hope you would produce such evidence in its behalf from scripture, as would remove my scruples, establish me in the received opinion, and enable me to bring my infants to baptism in faith. But how great was my disappointment when I found, that your main arguments for the baptism of infants stood in opposition to the scriptures, as well as to the leading sentiment contended for in the *Testimony of the King of Martyrs*!

As the scripture view of baptism has hitherto been but little attended to in Scotland, and as you have contributed your part to strengthen the prejudices of men against it, insomuch, that some of your adherents

\* Glas's Works, vol. i. p. 123, 124, first edit.

† P. 192--210.



have boasted of this Dissertation as unanswerable, I shall, according to my ability, follow you step by step through the whole of your arguments, and accommodate my answers to the nature and manner of them, without either artfully evading their force, or wilfully perverting their meaning.

I shall conclude this introductory epistle, by stating what appears to me to be the scripture view of baptism. And,

1. Baptism is an ordinance, instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ, under the new and better covenant, which belongs only to the apparent subjects of that covenant, upon the profession of their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; being a sign and representation to them of the cleansing efficacy of his blood, and regenerating operations of his Spirit, and so of their having communion with, and conformity to him in his death, burial, and resurrection, by dying unto sin and living unto righteousness, Matth. xxviii. 19. Acts viii. 37. Rom. vi. 4. Col. ii. 12.

2. The name into which believers are to be baptized, is that of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Matth. xxviii. 19.

3. The action termed baptism is immersion, or dipping of the body in water, as appears from the proper acceptation of the Greek word, and from the circumstances of our Lord's baptism, Matth. iii. 16. and those of the eunuch's, Acts viii. 38, 39. as also from the allusions made to it as a burial and resurrection, Rom. vi. 3, 4. Col. ii. 12.

Now, whether infants are the proper subjects of this ordinance or not, shall be considered in the subsequent letters. Meantime, I am,

SIR,  
K                      Your, &c.

## LETTER II.

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SIR,

IN the Introduction to your Dissertation on Infant-baptism, you make an observation on several questions and disputes about baptism. But I have no concern with any thing there, excepting the last paragraph, where you observe,

That "the denying of infant-baptism comes of making the salvation by baptism to lie in something else than the thing signified; even that, whatever it be, which distinguishes the adult Christian from his infant: though our Lord expressly declares, that we must enter his kingdom even as infants enter it. The first opposition that we hear of to infant-baptism, turned salvation upon an entire sort of believing, whereof infants are incapable; whereas there is not any true faith, or sincere confession of the faith, but that alone which acknowledges, that salvation lies only and wholly in the thing signified in baptism. And, if we enquire how that thing saves us? our Lord answers, Just as it saves our infants. The denial of infant-baptism must have always proceeded from a disbelief of this."

*To this I answer, 1.* That if we maintain that infants obtain salvation by the sovereign free grace of God, through the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ, without regard to any outward ordinance, how does it follow, that their salvation lies not only and wholly in the thing signified to the adult in baptism, but in something else?

2. If we deny infant-baptism, because it is neither commanded nor exemplified in scripture; because infants can give no evidence that they are the proper subjects of baptism, and because it cannot be a sign to them of the thing signified; will it therefore follow, that when they become visible believers, and can discern baptism to represent salvation by the death and resurrection of Christ; I say, will it then fairly follow, that their salvation must turn upon something else than the death and resurrection of Christ, which is represented to them in that ordinance, or upon any thing about themselves distinguishing them from infants? Certainly it will not: that which gives the answer of a good conscience to the adult believer in baptism, must be the very same thing with that which saves infants.

3. If an explicit profession of the faith, a discerning of the thing signified, and an engagement to put off the body of the sins of the flesh, be qualifications which turn the salvation of the adult upon a different footing from that of infants, or the thing signified in baptism; then, by necessary consequence, these things are not to be required in the adults, either in order to baptism or the Lord's supper. But if you require these things in adults, you must either admit that your charge against the Baptists is groundless, or that you are guilty of the same thing.

4. Though we own, that the thing signified in baptism saves infants just as it saves adults, yet we deny infant-baptism; for we distinguish betwixt the *thing signified* and the *sign signifying*; the former is bestowed upon all the elect of God, whether adults or infants; the latter belongs to those who appear to be such, and can discern its meaning, who are only the adult. Again, we distinguish betwixt *the objects of*



*God's everlasting love and the visible subjects of gospel ordinances* ; the former are known with certainty only to God ; the latter are known to men by the visible personal characters whereby he hath pointed them out in his word.

To affirm then, that the denial of infant-baptism must have always proceeded from a disbelief that salvation lies only and wholly in the thing signified in baptism, is both an uncharitable and groundless assertion.

5. This accusation might with equal colour of reason be retorted upon the Pœdobaptists : For they require the faith and profession of the parent in order to warrant the baptism of his infant. Baptists require a *personal* profession, while Pœdobaptists sustain a *vicarious* one ; but as this last is also something “ else than the thing signified,” and which the adult Christian performs for his infant, so there is the same ground for the above assertion in this case as in the other. The only way therefore to get rid of this charge, is to pay no regard to any profession of faith in order to baptism.

6. Infant-baptism was at first introduced upon the supposed necessity of it to salvation, which certainly was making salvation to lie in the outward ordinance rather than in the thing signified thereby ; at least it was making the thing signified to be unavailable without the sign.

But men had not then learned to confine the salvation by baptism to that, whatever it be, which distinguishes the infants of believers from those of infidels ; though indeed they were at no loss ; for the ancient necessity of baptism to salvation, is by far a better argument than the modern covenant holiness,

or salvation to a believer's house. Nor can I see how Infant-baptism could ever take place upon such arguments as are mostly used by Protestants in support of it at this day; and therefore I think it not very grateful in modern Pædobaptists to condemn the original principle from which their favourite institution received its existence. I am,

SIR,

Your, &c.

## LETTER III.

SIR,

I HAVE been carefully considering the first section of your dissertation, which contains a scheme of the controversy, and state of the question about scripture precept and example. You say,

“The whole plea against infant-baptism comes to this, That there is neither particular express precept nor indisputable example for it in the New Testament, where baptism is inseparably connected with a profession of the faith, which infants are not capable to make.”

*Ans.* Though our whole plea came only to what you mention, it would be sufficient to refute infant-baptism : for when we consider how particular and express God’s injunctions were, with respect to every circumstance of the old covenant rituals, we can never imagine, that such an important ordinance of the new covenant would be left, as a matter of doubtful disputation, to be gathered only from dark and inconclusive hints, or dubious consequences.

But the truth is, there is neither precept nor example, direct nor indirect, particular nor general, expressed nor implied, in either the Old Testament or the New, in favour of infant-baptism : so that our plea against it comes to more than you imagine.

“All this (you say) may be owned, at the same time that the inference from it is denied.”

Here then you give up with express precept and indisputable example ; but then you deny the inference,



viz. That infants ought not to be baptized ; because you think, that, by the same argument, we might debar women from the Lord's Supper : for you say, " We can no more show, by express particular precept, or indisputable example, that Christian women are included in the precept, *Do this in remembrance of me*, and *Drink ye all of it*, than we can prove, by such precept or example, that Christian infants are comprehended in the precept, *Baptizing them*." And then you make no scruple to assert, That we have the same evidence for infants being members of Christ's body, as we have of believing women being such. But to this it may be answered,

1. That Christian women are manifested to be subjects of gospel ordinances by a personal profession and character, answerable to what the scripture requires ; but infants, as they can make no such profession, so the fleshly birth, be it of whom it may, can not denominate them subjects of baptism, any more than it can evidence their being born again.

2. The scripture expressly tells us, That there is no distinction of male and female among those who are one in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 28. whilst it makes a very wide distinction betwixt the natural and spiritual seed, and shows, that the former, as such, have no right to the privileges of the latter, Rom. ix. 6, 7. Gal. iii. 29. Now, if the scripture denies that there is any distinction of sexes in the one body of Christ, it is certainly wrong in you to make such an *unscriptural* distinction in order to confound a *real* one, which still subsists betwixt infants and adult visible believers, with respect to gospel ordinances, as both the visible characters required, and the nature and design of these ordinances show.

3. You cannot but be sensible, that the precept, *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat, &c.* (1 Cor. xi. 28.) includes both sexes; for the word there translated *Man*, is not *ανηρ*, which is restricted to the male sex in distinction from the female, but *ανδρωπος*, which is the common gender, and comprehends both male and female, except where some particular circumstance in the text restricts the sense. Here then the precept for eating the Lord's supper is as expressly directed to Christian women as it is to men. But I might have spared myself this remark; for I am persuaded that the weakest woman, that reads her English Bible, can be at no loss to see, that the word *Man* frequently comprehends both sexes.

“Now (say you) as soon as we begin to seek a warrant for any such thing in this manner, we must depart from the principle that every opposer of infant-baptism sets out upon, viz. That such an express precept, and such a plain example, is necessary to show the warrant for it.”

*Answ.* So it seems you are obliged to depart from precept and example at the very outset of your journey.

I am not at all surprised you should depart from the principle *we* set out upon; but I must observe that in so doing, you have been obliged also to depart from the principle which *you yourself* set out upon when you left the national church. In your speech before the Commission of the General Assembly, you give the following reason for not subscribing the *Formula*, viz. “because I cannot see *precept* or *example* in scripture for the government of this national church by kirk-sessions, presbyteries, provincial and national synods.—And if it should be my opinion, that it requires *precept* or *example* in God's word for such a

government, to warrant me to declare that it is founded in that word ;—I see no proposition in the public standards of the church that condemns this.”\* Now, Sir, I ask, Why do you depart, in stating the controversy about infant-baptism, from that very principle, without which (by your own confession) you have no warrant to declare that it is founded in the word of God ?

You take notice of another troublesome principle of the Baptists, viz. “That baptism is inseparably connected in the New Testament with a profession of the faith, which infants are not capable to make.”

You might have answered this as the former, by telling us, That we have no instance in scripture of women making an express profession of their faith before their receiving the Lord’s Supper ; and why should we require it of infants before baptism ? But this would be too bare-faced, and therefore you say, “It may be owned, that baptism cannot be administered to any, but upon a confession by which the baptized can be called *disciples* according to the scriptures : for it can well be said, that infants are to be baptized upon a profession of the faith by which the scripture warrants us to account them disciples with their parents, as well as to look on them, with their believing parents, as holy and of the kingdom of heaven, or the true church, into which all Christians are baptized.”

The necessity of a profession in order to baptism, it seems, may be owned : but how can it be owned, without denying baptism to those who cannot make a profession ? For this you have a curious *salvo* at hand,

\* Glas’s Works, vol. i. p. 221.



without which you would never have owned it, viz. Though infants cannot profess the faith, yet their parents can do it for them; and this warrants us to account them disciples, and baptize them. This is indeed strange reasoning.

Disciples are made by teaching:

Believing parents are taught:

Therefore, their children are disciples, and may be baptized.

But there is no affinity between the conclusion and the premises, and so it amounts only to a bare assertion or begging of the question.

However, by granting that a profession is necessary to infant-baptism, you entirely overthrow what you charge upon us in the introduction, else you are guilty of the same thing. For if you will not baptize infants, without the profession of the parents, then it is evident that you hold something necessary to baptism whereof infants are incapable, even that *profession* which the parents make in their stead, and that *faith* of which it is the profession.—May we not then with equal justice, retort, That the requiring such a profession of the parent in order to the baptism of his infant, comes of making the salvation by baptism to lie in something else than the thing signified; even in that, whatever it be, which the adult Christian must perform for his infants, and which gives them a right to baptism in distinction from the children of infidels. But I must take notice of your scripture proof for the discipleship of infants.

“ For when the Judaizers sought to have the Gentile Christians circumcised to keep the law, as necessary to their salvation by Christ, Peter said to them, “ Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of

the disciples." But the Judaizers were seeking to have this yoke laid upon the infants of the believing parents; and therefore Peter, who received the command to baptize disciples, took that designation to comprehend infants, and called them disciples with their parents."

But though it be granted, that the infants of believing Gentiles would have been circumcised with their parents according to the law of circumcision, yet it is by no means evident, that Peter comprehended these infants in the designation *disciples*; for what other manner of expression is it natural to think the apostle would use, upon this occasion, though infants had been excepted in that designation? If we look into the context, we shall find, that those whom he terms disciples, are characterized in such a manner as will not apply to infants; "And certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren," &c. Acts xv. 1. so they were *brethren* capable of being taught. "God which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples," &c. ver. 8, 9, 10. Now, can any thing be more plain, than that the apostle's argument against circumcising the Gentile disciples, turns upon the evidence of their having received the Holy Ghost, and of having their hearts purified by faith? The apostle James calls them, "those which from among the Gentiles have turned unto God." If such then be the account given of those whom the apostle terms *disciples*, it is plain, that he did not intend infants in that designation, though, (according to the law of circumcision) they might be circumcised with their parents.

Besides, it was not simply *circumcision*, nor the *keeping of the law of Moses*, which Peter calls a yoke that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear; for both they and their fathers had borne this; and the infants even of Jewish converts were permitted at that time to be circumcised; but it was the “doctrine of its necessity unto salvation,” which was this intolerable yoke, as appears from ver. 1, 5. It was this which made the law of Moses a killing letter, a ministration of death and condemnation. To this doctrine the apostle opposes “salvation by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,” ver. 11. But this doctrine could be no such yoke upon the neck of infants, who could not understand it; it could neither please nor grieve them. Therefore it follows inevitably, that infants were not reckoned by Peter amongst those whom he terms *disciples*.

Further, you should consider how our Lord himself describes his disciples in Luke xiv. 26, 27. John viii. 31. and xiii. 35. and xv. 8. These are characters without which, he says, no man can be his disciple; but these characters will not apply to infants, and therefore the designation *disciples* cannot be given them. Besides, according to the scriptures, disciples are made by teaching; for the word, in the original, signifies a *learner*, or *one that is taught*. But infants are incapable of being taught; therefore they cannot be disciples in the scripture style and way of speaking.

But then you say, “according to the commission in Mark’s Gospel to preach and baptize, infants must either be reckoned with the believing or the damned. For as to the believing there connected with baptism, it is expressly said, “He that believeth not shall be damned:” and therefore, if we cannot look on the



infants of the faithful, dying in infancy, as damned, we must look upon them, according to this scripture, as believing, and so entitled to baptism, here connected with the believing that includes them in distinction from the damned."

Here, it seems, we are laid under a necessity of judging the states of infants; if they are children of believers, we must reckon them with the believing and saved; consequently, if they are children of unbelievers, we must, by the same rule, reckon them with the unbelieving and damned, according to your view of Christ's commission. And this reckoning must be of such as die in infancy; for you own, there may be occasion for another kind of reckoning with respect to those of them who arrive at an adult state. But, dear Sir, are you not as sensible as any, that there is not one syllable in all that commission, either of the infants of believers or of infidels, dying in infancy, or otherwise? So that you must go elsewhere to establish this notion.

We must either, it seems, own that infants are believers, or reckon they are damned dying in infancy; but what if we should neither own the one nor the other? The scripture lays us under no such necessity of determining their state; but on the contrary shews, that the sovereign purpose of God according to election will stand with respect to children that have done neither good nor evil, whether they ever in this life arrive at a capacity for knowing and believing the gospel or not; yea, whether their parents be believers or not; so that we rest this matter upon the sovereignty and good pleasure of the righteous Judge, who "hath mercy on whom he will," Rom. ix. 18.

But I beg, Sir, you would consider in what ab-

surdities and inconsistencies, your judgment of the state of infants necessarily involves you. As,

1. If you draw the salvation of the infants of believers from these words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; you must also, by the same rule, (as has been observed) infer the damnation of the infants of infidels from these other words, "he that believeth not shall be damned," both being equally affirmed in this place. Now whether this be not as harsh and unmerciful a principle, as the popish damnation of unbaptized infants, I leave you to judge.

2. As the scripture informs us, that many of the adult children of infidels have been saved, it follows that their salvation turned upon something which they did in their riper years, since (upon your plan) they could not be reckoned with the saved had they died in infancy.

3. Though you affirm the salvation of the children of believers, dying in infancy; yet you own, that many of them fall short of it when they survive that state.\* I ask then, what kind of salvation must that be, which can only be certainly secured by their dying in infancy; which may take wing upon their first reflection, or wear out through length of time? Does that which saves dying infants, lose its whole efficacy on those of riper years? Or are they saved by free grace in infancy, but conditionally when they grow up, and so forfeit their salvation by failing in the terms? If so, I cannot help thinking, that you still hold a difference betwixt that which saves infants dying in infancy, and that which saves those who survive that state.

4. As you ground the salvation of infants upon

\* Page 303.

their connection with their believing parents, I ask, what kind of connection is it? If it is the *fleshly* connection, how can spiritual blessings be derived in this manner? and if they are, what hinders the children from reaping the benefit of this connection in their adult state, seeing they are still the children of believing parents? But it is evident spiritual blessings come not by the fleshly relation; for Ishmael was thus related to believing Abraham; but was he therefore counted for the seed, and a child of the promise as Isaac was? Esau was thus connected with believing Isaac; but was he not hated whilst Jacob was loved, and that according to God's purpose of election, before either of them had done good or evil? If the connection betwixt the believer and his infants be *spiritual*, how comes this to be dissolved when they grow up, so that even an Esau or an Absalom may appear a son of perdition? Does a spiritual connection, that entails salvation, wear out through length of time? And at what time does this connection cease, so that the children can reap no longer any saving benefit from it?

But after all, perhaps you will say, you are only pleading for that judgment of charity which we ought to exercise towards the infants of believers, whilst you do not pretend to judge their real state, as it is in the sight of God. But it must be observed,

1. That the text from which you form this judgment, will admit of no distinction of this nature.—It is a real truth in the sight, purpose, and intention of God, that he that believeth shall be saved; so that if the scripture classes the infants of believers with the believing, they shall all as certainly be saved, as the scripture declares it, or as God is true who hath promised it.

Though we, who cannot know the hearts, may be deceived by men's professions; yet God will never deceive us by his open declarations, which will stand true whether we believe them or not. He does not beg our judgment of charity to his veracity; but challenges our firmest belief upon our highest peril.

2. The judgment of charity respects our fellow men, goes upon plausible appearances, and implies a possibility of mistake. Now if God's open declarations, with respect to infants, be only a foundation for our judgment of charity; then, for any thing we know, we may be mistaken in our judgment from these declarations, and that not only as they respect the state of infants, but as they respect the foundation of our own faith and hope: for it is absurd to affirm, that the scripture calls for full assurance of faith, whilst it gives us no other foundation for it, than what we have for our charitable view of one another, in which, it shews, we are often deceived. So that you see I must either consider you as determining the *real* state of infants, in the sight, purpose, and intention of God, or as playing fast and loose with the open declarations of the God of truth.

If you should reply, That the scripture enjoins us to look upon infants in the same light with their parents; so that if we were assured of the salvation of the parents, we should be equally assured of the salvation of their children: I answer,

This is contrary to scripture facts. Abraham was a real believer in the sight of God, and declared to be so; yet the scripture never enjoins us to look upon his son Ishmael in the same light. Isaac was also a true believer, and an heir with Abraham of the same promise; yet we are not allowed to pass the same judg-



ment upon his son Esau. David was a man after God's own heart; yet we are obliged to form another view of his son Absalom.

If it be objected, that these did not die in infancy, and so are foreign to the point: I answer,

1. Does our Lord's commission, in Mark's Gospel, make any distinction between infants dying in infancy and those who survive that state? Does it warrant us to believe, that adult unbelievers would have been saved, had they died in infancy? Or, does any other place in all the scripture give the least hint of this? Are we not expressly told, that Esau was hated, not only in his infancy, but before he was born, having done neither good nor evil?

2. If you believe that the purpose of God according to election will stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; and that infants and adults are saved by the same thing; how can you ever imagine that their dying, or not dying, in infancy, makes any difference here?

3. The utmost that can be pleaded upon this point is, that as scripture does not expressly determine the state of infants dying in infancy, it is safest to err on the charitable side. And, if this were all you meant, I should not dispute it; though for my own part, I think it more eligible to leave them entirely to the judgment of God.

Upon the whole, I cannot perceive the least shadow of argument in what you advance from our Lord's commission. For you first take it for granted that infants, and only those of believers, are included in that commission. Then, by a strange kind of logic, you convert these infants into believers, or, at least, *look upon them as believing*, and so entitled to baptism.

But because not only scripture and common sense, but also experience itself often contradicts these groundless fancies, therefore you are obliged to restrict them to such infants as die in infancy. Those children who survive their infant state, and appear unbelievers, you have nothing to do with, for two reasons; first, because they did not die in infancy; and secondly, because adult children are not the infants of believing parents, as you inform us afterwards. But these are mere evasions, and serve only to shew the weakness of your cause.

Before I conclude this letter, I would beg you seriously to consider, That as we have no warrant from scripture to reckon particular infants with the believing or the unbelieving, and so to determine their state merely from the judgment we form of their parents; so the scripture is very express, that God, from all eternity, hath elected some to everlasting life; and it is enough for us to know that the elect shall obtain salvation, whether they die young or old; have believing or unbelieving parents; be baptized in water, or unbaptized. Salvation is of sovereign free grace, and takes place not according to our age, situation, or connections in life; but according as we are chosen in Christ before the world began, and according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Thus in the case of Esau and Jacob, “the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Far be it. For he

saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," Rom. ix. 11—16. Thus it appears inconsistent with the sovereignty and freedom of divine grace, to hinge the salvation of infants upon their connection with believing parents; as, on the other hand, to suppose it necessary that the children of infidels should be adults before they can be subjects of it, and it is no less inconsistent with this rich grace to suppose, that any of its objects will ever finally fall away. With great propriety then may the Christian sing;

Magnificent free Grace, arise  
Outshine the thoughts of shallow man;  
Sov'reign, preventing, all surprise  
To him that neither will'd nor ran :

Grand as the bosom whence it flow'd,  
Kind as the heart that gave it vent,  
Rich as the Gift that God bestow'd,  
And lovely like the Christ he sent.

Know then, on no precarious ground  
Stands this rich grace and life to men ;  
For life now reigns in God's dear Son,  
For us by divine justice slain.

*Christian Songs, p. 5, 13.*

I am your, &c.

## LETTER IV.

SIR,

YOUR next argument for infant-baptism is drawn from the apostles' *baptizing believers and their houses*. You say,

The apostles in executing their commission, preached salvation in Christ to a man and his 'house.'—

*Answ.* They did so; for Cornelius said unto Peter, "We are ALL here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God," Acts x. 33. So Peter preached salvation in Christ to them ALL. Likewise, with respect to the Jailer and his house, it is said, "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to ALL that were in his house." And they could do no less; for they had a commission to preach the gospel to every creature. Thus far then we agree.

—"And, according to this preaching, he that believed on Christ for his own salvation, believed on him also for the salvation of his house; for so his belief answered to that which was preached."—

Here is *appropriation* with a witness! Whatever improprieties the popular preachers are guilty of in their calls to the *appropriating act of faith*, they never, that I could learn, extended the saving benefit thereof beyond the person's self; but, according to you, a man is not only warranted to *appropriate* salvation to himself, but also to his whole house. If we look into the subject of the apostles' preaching, we shall find, that it did not respect any particular man's



person or house; but was a declaration of the free grace of God to sinners, through the merits, atonement, and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ; and a promise that whosoever believed this should be saved: but it was no part of their preaching, that a believer's house would be saved upon his faith, without believing themselves; and therefore, such a belief was not required of any, nor could it any way answer to that which was preached.

You endeavour to prove, that the apostles preached salvation to a man's house if he *alone* believed, from the following scriptures;—"who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved," Acts xi. 14. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house," Acts xvi. 31. Here you cull out detached sentences without regard to the connection, and then fix upon the sound of the words instead of the sense. But we are expressly told that these houses *themselves* believed, as well as their owners.

The first passage relates to Cornelius and his house, concerning whom we are told, that he was "one that feared God, with ALL his house, Acts x. 2. He and ALL his were present to hear Peter's sermon, (ver. 33.) in which there was not the least intimation, that his house would be saved upon his believing; but the apostle having set before them Christ's life, death, and resurrection, he concludes thus; "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH ON HIM, shall receive remission of sins," ver. 43. Then it follows; While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on ALL them that heard the word," ver. 44. Now, what can we gather from this, but that remission of sins is granted to all

that *believe*; and that the household of Cornelius believed and received the Holy Ghost as well as himself? And was not this the exact accomplishment of what the angel said to Cornelius concerning the words whereby he and all his house should be saved?

The other passage relates to the Jailer and his house. In answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved? it is said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house," Acts xvi. 31. This by no means implies, that the Jailer's faith would save his house, or that he was commanded to believe for the salvation of his house as well as for his own; but only, that his house would be saved, as well as he, believing on Christ; and this sense is clearly ascertained by what follows; for "they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to ALL that were in his house," ver. 32. But why to ALL that were in his house, if he could have believed in their stead? That all his house, as well as himself, understood and believed the word which was preached to them, is clear from ver. 34.—"he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with ALL his house." Thus we see how the Jailer and his house were saved. But you proceed;

—"And it is no less evident that they baptized the believer and his house; Thus Paul says, 1 Cor. i. 16. "And I baptized also the household of Stephanas." And it is said of Lydia, Acts xvi. 15. "And when she was baptized and her house;" and of the Jailer, ver. 33. "he was baptized, he and all his."

It is indeed no less evident that these houses you mention were *baptized*, than it is that they *believed*. But the point to be proved is, whether infants or others in these houses were baptized upon the faith of the parent.

Unless you can make this appear, the baptism of these houses makes nothing for your purpose.

The baptism of the household of Stephanas will not prove this; for the apostle, about three years after their conversion, gives the following account of that household, "I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints) that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth," 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16. Here it is evident that they were adults, since otherwise they could not minister to the saints, or help and labour with the apostles. This is further manifest from their being the first-fruits of Achaia, concerning which we read,—“and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized,” Acts xviii. 8. These three words express the beautiful order which the apostles observed in executing their commission; they first preached, and when those who *heard, believed*, they then, and not till then, *baptized* them.

The baptism of the household of Lydia makes nothing at all for your purpose, unless you can make it appear she had infants, and that they were baptized upon her believing; but this, I imagine, you will not undertake; nor will the scripture account of her and her house admit this supposition; “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized and her house, &c.” Acts xvi. 14, 15. From hence it would appear, either that she never was married, or that her husband was then dead; for

she seems to be chief manager in the business of selling purple; besides, it is not usual in scripture to denominate a household by the wife, whilst she is clothed with a husband: it is more natural then, to think she had no infant-children to be baptized. But making the supposition of her having a husband, and children that were infants, (which cannot be proved) is it to be imagined, she would bring these infants along with her all the way from Thyatira in Asia, the place of her residence, to Philippi in Macedonia, where she appears to have come with the design of selling her purple? In ver. 40. it is said, "And they (viz. Paul and Silas) went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed." Now as we read of no *brethren* in that city, but those of the households of Lydia and of the Jailer, so their being *comforted* of Paul and Silas, shews them to be adults and not infants.

Nor will the baptism of the Jailer's house avail your plea; for as it is said, that believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, he and his house shall be saved; and that "he and ALL his were baptized;" so likewise we are told, that "they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to ALL that were in his house," prior to their baptism; and that "he rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house," ver. 32, 34. Now, Sir, can you tell me why the word ALL may not be as comprehensive in the latter as in the former? If the Jailer had any infants, they are either excluded from the ALL that were *baptized*, or they must be included in the ALL that *heard* the word, *believed*, and *rejoiced*; which last, I think, no rational man will affirm.

Here I would ask, What do you mean by a believ-



er's house? Is it made up of infants, or of adults, or of both? If it includes both, then a believer's wife and adult children are saved by his faith, and so may be baptized upon this ground, as well as his infants. If you say, it includes only infants, upon what scripture do you ground this distinction? Did not Abraham's house include adults as well as infants; servants as well as sons; those bought with his money, as well as those sprung from his body? And was not circumcision expressly enjoined, and actually administered to them all? Gen. xvii. 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27. Does not the apostle term these adult persons who ministered to the saints, *the house of Stephanas*? Who would ever imagine, that the saints of Cæsar's household, who sent their salutations to the church at Philippi, were only a nursery of sucklings? Phil. iv. 22. Yet something like this must be supposed, if your argument have any consistency; else it will follow, that adults as well as infants; infidels as well as believers; wife as well as children; servants as well as sons, must every one of them be baptized upon the single profession of the parent or master; for they are all included in the scripture use of the word *household*.

You conclude your first section by saying, "If we deny scripture example for the baptizing of infants, we must first deny there were any infants in these baptized houses. And as we can plead no foundation in scripture for that, it is too bold to say, that there is no scripture example for baptizing infants."

Whether, from what has been said above, it appears most agreeable to the scope of these scriptures, to say there were, or were not infants in these baptized houses, I leave you to consider at your leisure: but if ever you should attempt to prove there were infants

in these houses, (which it concerns you much to do) I hope you will guard against all future objections, by proving they also *believed* and were baptized. Meantime, I despair of either of these being done in a hurry, and therefore still affirm with boldness, that there is no scripture example for baptizing infants.

I am,

SIR,

Your, &c.

## LETTER V.

SIR,

I NOW proceed to consider your second section, which shews, *that infants must partake of baptism from their having part in the promise of the Holy Ghost unto which Christians are baptized*; and proceeds thus;

“ We see in the very first call to those in Jerusalem to repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, the promise of the Holy Ghost, unto which they were baptized, was to them and to their children; even them who had said, *His blood be on us and on our children*. Peter said unto them, Acts ii. 38, 39, “ Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you (who are presently called,) and to your children, (who are connected with you in the condemnation,) and (in like manner as to you and your children, so also) to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” For as that promise of the Holy Ghost was to as many as the Lord then called in Jerusalem, and to their children; so it must be to as many as the Lord calls afar off from thence, and to their children. Now if they who repent be baptized unto the promise of the Holy Ghost, Acts xix. 2, 3. and if that promise unto which they are baptized, be to their children as well as unto them; then certainly baptism, as far as it is connected with that promise, must belong to their children as well as to them.”

It would be a sufficient answer to all this to show, that this promise of the Holy Ghost was made to their children just as it was made to themselves, viz. to as many of them as should *repent* and be *called* of the Lord; for to such the apostle restricts the promise. However I shall consider more particularly, The promise itself: and then enquire, To whom it was made.

1. The promise which Peter had particularly in his eye, is that in Joel ii. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32. “ And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.”

This prophecy or promise may be considered either, In a limited sense; or, In a more general and extended sense.

1. In its limited sense, it is an Old Testament promise of the Spirit, which was fulfilled in the apostolic age; as is evident from the miraculous signs which were to attend it, such as their sons and daughters prophesying, the wonders to be shown in the heavens, &c. and it was likewise to take place before the great and terrible day of the Lord came in the destruction of the Jewish church and state, foretold by our Lord,



Matth. xxiv. Mark xiii. and Luke xxi. The apostle expressly applies it to that extraordinary effusion of the Spirit which began on the day of Pentecost, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," Acts ii. 16. and then cites the passage. You may likewise see how it is applied in *The Testimony of the King of Martyrs*, p. 57. near the bottom.

Peter in his sermon proceeds to show, in what manner that promise in Joel came to be accomplished, ver. 22—37. viz. That God having raised that same Jesus whom they had crucified, (according as it was foretold by David in the sixteenth Psalm,) and being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Spirit, he had shed forth that which they then saw and heard.

Now these gifts of the Spirit, which were then seen and heard by the multitude, were miraculous and extraordinary, and were to cease when they had reached their end, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. And as the promise, in this sense, will not apply to infants, so the apostle could mean no more by the words *your children*, than what the promise itself plainly expresses, viz. *your sons and your daughters*, who should prophesy. Nor is it clear, that the apostle applies this promise to any other than the Jews and their children; for he had not as yet learned, that the time had come when the Gentiles should *receive the promise of the Spirit through faith*.

2. We may consider this promise of the Spirit in a more *general* and *extended* sense, viz. That gift of the Spirit which is absolutely necessary for the regeneration and sanctification of all the people of God in all ages of the world, and which is bestowed upon all that are Christ's, Rom. viii. 9. But how will it apply, in this sense, to all the natural seed of believers? That

elect infants may receive the Spirit, I make no doubt; but that all the natural seed of believers obtain this, is manifestly false, and contrary both to scripture and experience. Even those infants who receive the Holy Ghost cannot be distinguished from those who do not, and so cannot be the subjects of baptism, which does not belong to them immediately as elect, or having the Spirit, but as *evidencing* this in the profession of their faith.

If the promise of the Holy Ghost be made to all the children of believers, then it will either be accomplished, or not. If it be not accomplished, how can we reconcile this with the character of God, as a God of truth and faithfulness, with whom it is impossible to lie? If this promise be actually made good, then none of believing Abraham's posterity could ever have been rejected; for as he had the Spirit himself, so all his natural children, yea, his children's children to the latest posterity, must also have the Spirit, otherwise the promise would fail whenever the succession of this gift was interrupted. But the New Testament demonstrates that the greater part of Abraham's natural seed were destitute of the Spirit and rejected, whilst at the same time it shows, that God's word of promise to Abraham has taken effect, Rom. ix. 6. Experience also shows us that the gift of the Spirit is not hereditary under the New Testament, and that many godly parents have wicked children, which could never be the case had God engaged himself by promise to give them his Holy Spirit. You yourself own,\* that the children "may yet be really irregenerate, and when adult appear to be so;" and that "if the children

\* Page 201.

become adult, not adhering to the baptismal profession, they have no more the character of holy."\* Now certainly you will not affirm, that irregenerate and unholy persons have the Spirit.

If it should be said, that the promise is conditional, and so may justly be suspended till the condition be performed ; then it will follow, that no infants can have the Spirit, for they cannot perform the condition, and (supposing the doctrine of free-will) perhaps never will, even in their adult state. But how, upon this plan, could the apostle affirm, That the promise is of grace that it might be sure to all the seed? Rom. iv. 16.

To affirm, then, That this promise belongs to *all* the natural seed of believers, *as such*, is the same as to affirm, That all of them have the Spirit, which is contrary both to scripture and experience ; or that God fails in performing his promise, which is blasphemy ; or that the promise is conditional, and then infants, while such, can have no interest in it, nor would it thus be sure even to adults.

It remains then that we consider to whom this promise was made.

Nothing can be plainer from the text, than that the apostle restricts the promise of the Holy Ghost to *as many* (of the Jews at Jerusalem, and of their children, and of them that are afar off) *as the Lord shall call*. That is, to as many as the Lord shall call effectually : for those whom he calls according to his purpose, he also justifies and glorifies, Rom. viii. 30. Those whom he calls of Jews and Gentiles, are termed " the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory," Rom. ix. 23, 24.

Such as considered the gospel promise made to Abraham as belonging to all his natural seed, could not but be stumbled at the rejection of the Jews, as if the word of God had taken none effect: but the apostle solves the whole difficulty, by distinguishing Abraham's seed into "the children of the flesh, and the children of God, or the children of the promise who are counted for the seed," Rom. ix. 8. This distinction he further illustrates in his epistle to the Galatians, under the notion of *the children of the bond woman*, and *the children of the free*; the former, as Ishmael was, are *born after the flesh*; the latter, as Isaac was, are *by promise*, Gal. iv. 22, 23, 28, 31. Now the gospel promises were not made to the fleshly seed of Abraham as such, but only to the spiritual seed chosen in Christ; and they, being Christ's, are also Abraham's seed, "heirs according to the promise—blessed with faithful Abraham—and receive the promise of the Spirit through faith," Gal. iii. 9, 14, 16, 29. As the promise respected only the spiritual seed; so to them it is fully accomplished, and to none else, be they children of whom they may; for natural generation gives no title here. But you proceed.

"Though the children could not in themselves know any thing of repentance or remission at the time of their baptism, as did their parents; yet they were even then as capable as they of the renewing of the Holy Ghost and saving change from which repentance flows; and as capable as they of justification by remission, and by the imputation of righteousness without works," &c.

*Ans.* If the children cannot in themselves know any thing of repentance or remission at the time of their baptism, then, according to the scriptures, they



are not capable of baptism; for the apostle Peter tells us, that *the answer, (or stipulation) of a good conscience towards God* is necessary to baptism, 1 Pet. iii. 21. But how children can have the answer of a good conscience in baptism, without knowing any thing of repentance or remission, you would do well to inform us.

That children are capable of the renewing of the Holy Ghost, justification, &c. I make no doubt; God both can and will sanctify all his elect, whether infants or adults. But what is this to the purpose? The question is not whether infants are capable of these things; but whether do all the natural children of believers appear to be actually justified and sanctified? Do they appear to be so either from scripture or experience? Unless you can make this evident, their *capability* is no argument at all upon which to found their baptism. After all, are they more capable of these things than the children of infidels? Is not "God able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham," though the natural branches should be broken off? The sovereignty of God shines forth in having mercy upon whom he will have mercy, without regard to any advantages of natural birth; and this is plainly exemplified in the rejection of a great part of the natural seed of believing Abraham, and chusing from among the nations a people for his name of the seed of heathen idolaters. So that it is but a vain plea for baptism, *we have a believer to our father*, Mat. iii. 9. for if Abraham could not save his house by his extraordinary faith, much less can any other believer do it, who never sustained his public character as *father of the faithful*.

Upon the whole, the apostle Peter, in order to en-

courage the convicted Jews to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, gives them to understand, that notwithstanding all they had done, in rejecting and crucifying the Messiah, God was still waiting to be gracious unto them, by granting them the remission of their sins, and the gift of his promised Spirit. And as it could not but cut them in their hearts, that they had not only perpetrated this dreadful action with their own wicked hands, but also wished his blood upon their children, the apostle further assures them, that the promise in Joel respected their children (or SONS and DAUGHTERS) as well as themselves; even such of them as should repent and call upon the name of the Lord, inasmuch as it is promised that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance as the Lord hath said;" nor is this deliverance confined to those in Jerusalem; but extends likewise to "all that are afar off, even the remnant whom the Lord shall call," Joel ii. 32. compared with Acts ii. 21, 39.

This promise was accomplished in the first place to the Jews, as it is said, "Unto you first God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." From which it appears, that it behoved their children as well as themselves to be turned from their iniquities, in as far as the promise or blessing took place upon them.

It may be further noticed, that this promise, as it respected the children, had no dependance on or connection with the faith of the parents, any more than the promise of Canaan to the succeeding generation had a dependance on the faith of their fathers who fell in the wilderness through unbelief. So that the infidelity of parents cannot make this promise of none effect to the children whom the Lord shall call.

But how any person can suppose, that a spiritual promise belongs to infants on account of their parents faith, so as thence to infer their baptism, is indeed very strange, and as foreign to the scope of the apostle in quoting the promise, as it is to the promise itself which he quotes. I am,

SIR,

Your, &c.

## LETTER VI.

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SIR,

I HAVE been considering the third section of your Dissertation, wherein you endeavour to *clear the argument from* 1 Cor. vii. 14. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband : else were your children unclean ; but now are they holy."

"These words (you say) serve to show, that the infants of one believing parent are members of Christ's church, for which he gave himself, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, which is the only church whereof they can be members ; and that therefore they must partake of the washing of water which belongs to that holy church, and signifies admission and entrance into it."

Then you anticipate an objection, viz. That as the children are said to be holy, so the unbelieving party is said to be sanctified by the other, and by parity of reason, is also a member of Christ's church. To which you answer, that the unbelieving wife (for instance) is sanctified, not to herself, but to, or in her husband, for the sake of the children, that they may be holy. And a little below you tell us,

"When Israel after the flesh married strange wives, it behoved these to be put away ; and likewise, the children begot upon them by Israelites were to be put away, as not being members of the commonwealth of Israel, or as not being a holy seed, or *seed of God*, but unclean as other Gentiles then were. But, says the



apostle, it is not so in the New Testament church; for its members being joined to aliens in marriage, are not to be separated from them, who are sanctified to their use in that state; so that their children, begot with such aliens, are now to be accounted holy, as well as the children begot by both believing parents; and are to be acknowledged as well as they, to be these little children whom the Lord declares to belong to his kingdom in distinction from the world."

Thus you have cleared the argument from this text; but I am afraid, that in so doing, you have obscured other points of greater concern than infant-baptism. As,

1. If the New Testament require only one parent to constitute the children members of Christ's *true* church, whilst the Old Testament required both parents to constitute them members of the *earthly typical* church; then it follows, that carnal generation is now more effectual to produce a *true* holy seed, than it was formerly to produce a *typical* holy seed.

2. If all the infants of believing parents are "those little children whom the Lord declares to belong to his kingdom in distinction from the world;" then it plainly follows, that the carnal birth, or that birth after the flesh, availeth as much, nay more, for the enjoyment of the privileges of the heavenly kingdom, as it did formerly for the enjoyment of the privileges of the earthly kingdom.

In your *Testimony of the King of Martyrs* \* you clear this doctrine in a quite different way, where you say, "The earthly birth, or that birth after the flesh, availeth much in the state of the church erected at

\* Glas's Works, p. 53. sect. 2.

Sinai, as to the enjoyment of the privileges of it. But now our Lord says to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again (or born from above) he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and Gal. iv. 26. "Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all."

How you can free yourself from inconsistency here, I cannot conceive; for unless you maintain that every one that is born of believing parents, is likewise born from above, the inconsistency is still glaring. And if you should endeavour to reconcile matters by making a distinction betwixt the *view* we should have of these infants, in the judgment of charity, and what they may be *really* in themselves, I have answered this already; and shall only add, That the case of infants is different from that of adults, as to the judgment of charity we ought to form of them. Adults may impose upon us by a plausible profession and walk, and as we cannot judge the heart, we must esteem those to be brethren that have the apparent characters of such; but if we are deceived in infants, they can have no hand in this deception, and consequently it must land upon the rule that directs our judgment of them: and I am rather inclined to attribute such a rule to you than to the scriptures of truth, as I am sure

"The faithful true witness will never deceive."

3. If all the infants of believers are "members of Christ's church for which he gave himself, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word;" then they shall all certainly be saved; for as the church you mention is the same with the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven, Heb. xii. 23. and as Christ gave himself for this church; so none of its members can ever perish or be plucked out of Christ's hands.

4. But if “those little children whom the Lord declares to belong to his kingdom, in distinction from the world,” fall away in their adult state, as you suppose some of them may,\* then a person may be a real member of Christ for a while, and afterwards a child of the devil; enrolled in heaven in the former part of his life, and, in the latter part of it, blotted out of the book of life. And if any one of these perish for whom Christ *gave himself*, why may not all of them? Upon this scheme, what ground has any to hope that all other blessings will be bestowed in consequence of the *gift of Christ*? Does not the apostle argue conclusively when he says, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?—Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” If the people of God must not look upon the “gift of God as eternal life through Jesus Christ,” what foundation is left for their hope, unless it be a conceit of something distinguishing about themselves, and after all who can trust his own heart?

It might likewise be shown how this scheme militates against the doctrine of election, effectual calling, the stability of the covenant, and the faithfulness of God. And though I am far from thinking you intend any such thing; yet, upon reflection, you may easily see, that the shifts you are put to in support of infant-baptism tend to unsettle every thing.

I shall now consider the scope of 1 Cor. vii. 14.

It is evident from the first verse of this chapter, that the Corinthians had written to the apostle for a solution of some doubtful cases, amongst which, by the apostle’s answer, this seems to have been one, *viz.* Whether it

\* Page 203.

was lawful for a believer, joined in marriage with an unbeliever, to continue in that relation? Whether this doubt arose from a mistaken regard to Moses' law, Deut. vii. 3. and the example in Ezra, chap. x. or from what he had written to them before, 1 Cor. v. 9, 10. is not material to know. However, the apostle decides the matter thus, "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." Thus the matter stands determined by the apostle; to which he adds the following reason; "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy," Ver. 12, 13, 14.

Two things offer themselves here to be considered.

1. The *sanctification* of the unbelieving party.
2. The *holiness* of the children in consequence thereof.

By the *sanctification* of the unbelieving party cannot be meant *internal sanctification*, or renovation of mind; for as the heart can only be purified by *faith*, the person, in that case, would be no longer an *unbeliever*. Neither can we understand it of *typical* or *ceremonial sanctification*; for this belonged only to the first covenant, which was then made old. There remain only two senses in which this sanctification of the unbelieving party can be understood;

1. *Instrumental sanctification*; or sanctified as an instrument of propagating a holy seed. Or,

1. *Matrimonial sanctification*, whereby the one is enjoyed as a chaste yoke-fellow by the other, without fornication or uncleanness.



The former of these senses you hold, in which you follow Mr. THOMAS GOODWIN; but that sense will not at all answer the apostle's purpose, which was to persuade the believing Corinthians to abide in their marriage relation with unbelievers. For,

1. If the unbelieving wife (for instance) were barren, then she could have no sanctification; for as this sanctification is not for herself, but for the children, in whom it terminates, how can it exist at all if she has none?

2. Though the unbelieving wife should bring forth children; yet if these children should lose the character of holy in their adult state, in what sense can we understand the unbelieving wife sanctified to bring forth holy children? The sanctification is not in herself, she being an unbeliever; neither is it in her children, they being irregenerate. Where then is it to be found? Thus, you see, the apostle's argument would be founded upon something very contingent and uncertain, and would have left the believing Corinthians, in many cases, at liberty to put away their unbelieving correlates.

But it is evident the apostle's argument was not founded upon any thing future or contingent; but upon what was certain and present, or rather past, for he useth the preter-perfect tense, *ἡγιασται*, *hath been sanctified*; so that this sanctification must be prior to, and independent of her having children, and also of the holiness of these children.

It may be noticed further, that the unbelieving wife is not here said to be sanctified by the *faith* of the husband; but barely *by (to or in) the husband*: and as faith respects only a spiritual relation, there is no ground to think it is here given as a reason for the lawfulness of the carnal relation of marriage; for

marriage does not derive its lawfulness from the faith of the gospel, but from the ordinance of God appointing, and the parties mutually agreeing, to be no more twain, but one flesh. Therefore,

The sanctification here spoken of must be of a *matrimonial* nature, and opposed to *fornication* or *uncleanness*. This will appear, whether we consider the meaning of the word *sanctification* in several places of the New Testament, or the scope of the apostle's argument here.

In 2 Cor. vii. 1. we find *holiness* or *sanctification* opposed to *filthiness of the flesh*, as well as of the spirit; and when it is said, (1 Cor. vii. 34. *that she may be holy in body*, must it not be understood of her being *chaste*? In 1 Thess. iv. 3. *sanctification* is opposed to fornication; "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." And in ver. 4, 5. it is contrasted with the lust of concupiscence; "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour. Not in the lust of concupiscence," &c. This *sanctification and honour* agrees with Heb. xiii. 4. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Now if the words *sanctification* and *honour* be opposed to *fornication*, *the lust of concupiscence*, *whoredom* and *adultery*, they must necessarily signify *chastity*. And if marriage be *honourable* (lawful or chaste) *in all*, we may easily see how the unbelieving wife is sanctified in, by, or to her husband, whilst she observes the laws of marriage, and keeps the *bed undefiled*. For though she be an unbeliever, yet being lawfully joined to an husband, she is *matrimonially holy*, and sanctified to his use, even as the creatures he eats and drinks are, 1 Tim. iv. 3, 4, 5. Therefore,

as these are not to be refused, so she is not to be put away.

The apostle backs the sanctification of the unbeliever with an argument drawn from an absurdity that would follow upon the contrary supposition; *Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.* As if he had said, If the unbelieving party were not a lawful yoke-fellow, then your children, being the issue of an impure junction, would be unclean; but now are they holy. This leads me to consider,

2. In what sense the children are said to be *holy*. What has been already said on the former head, leaves nothing to be done here, but formally to draw the conclusion. No stream can rise higher than its source, nor can any cause produce an effect disproportioned to its nature. *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh*, and will remain so for any thing that flesh can do. If therefore, as has been shown, the unbelieving wife be only sanctified to her husband *matrimonially*, so as they may lawfully, chastely, and honourably dwell together without fornication or uncleanness; then all the holiness that can accrue to the children from this sanctification, is only *legitimacy*, as being lawfully begotten; and the uncleanness opposed to this, can only be *illegitimacy* or *bastardy*, as being the issue of an unlawful marriage.\*

If it be objected, that this view of the place will apply as well to unbelievers and their children, as to believers and theirs, I answer,

\* If we were to regard the opinion of learned and judicious commentators, such as *Camerarius, Melancthon, Musculus, Beza, &c.* they all agree in giving the above view of the place; and *Calvin* on Mal. ii. 15. owneth, that *holy seed*, or *seed of God*, is an Hebraism for *legitimate seed*.



In some respects it will. The apostle here sustains the lawfulness of those marriages which were consummated while both parties were unbelievers; for it is more natural to suppose, that they were married before their conversion, than that they should afterwards marry infidels when they had scruples about dwelling with them. He likewise sustains the legitimacy of such children as were begotten before the conversion of either parent; for he makes no exception here, and that they had such children, we need make no doubt.

It may be further objected, That if the sanctification of the unbeliever be only of a *matrimonial* nature, then the apostle might with equal propriety affirm, that the believing party was sanctified to the unbelieving.

To this it may be answered, 1. This was not the point in question. The apostle is not answering the scruples of infidels, but of Christians; who were not doubting of their own sanctification in that respect, but of the sanctification of their unbelieving correlates; nor of the lawfulness of marriage in general, but only in the peculiar circumstances mentioned; for which they had some colour of reason from the law of Moses.

2. It would not only be improper, but absurd, to say, that the believing party was sanctified to the other; for the party which the law held unclean was the alien, not the Israelite; and so this uncleanness must be shown to be removed from the party upon which the law and the consciences of the believing Corinthians had fixed it, and not from the party that was looked upon as clean already: therefore the apostle says, the *unbelieving* wife or husband is sanctified. But then this sanctification implies no moral change in the unbeliever; but only a relative change, in respect of a law that formerly prohibited such a connection, and in respect of the believer's conscience, which is now freed



from that law, and so can dwell with them in sanctification and honour. What the apostle says about the sanctification of the meats prohibited under the law, serves much to illustrate this point; accordingly he classes them together when opposing the doctrine of the false teachers, who forbade marriage, and commanded to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving. See 1 Tim. iv. 3, 4, 5.

In fine, whether we consider the gospel doctrine, the scope of the apostle's argument, or the sense of the like expressions in several other places of the New Testament, all concur in ascertaining this view of the place, viz. That the unbelieving party is sanctified to the other, in so far as he or she is a *chaste* and *lawful* yoke-fellow, according to the ordinance of God appointing them to be one flesh, whom no man ought to put asunder: and their children are in so far holy, as they are begotten in *lawful wedlock*, and not by fornication.

You take notice of this sense, and call it a ridiculous gloss on the text: but add, that "it will bring us back to the very same thing that this text always served to demonstrate, viz. That the children of believers, begot by such aliens, were now to be accounted holy,—and are to be acknowledged to be those little children whom the Lord declares to belong to his kingdom in distinction from the world." That is, in short, if children are not illegitimate, but the lawful issue even of one believing parent, they thereby appear to be born from above, and consequently must be baptized!

I am,

SIR,

Your, &c.

## LETTER VII.

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SIR,

I INTEND in this letter to try the weight of your fourth section, which shows *how baptism comes in place of circumcision*, and proceeds thus :

The argument for infant baptism from circumcision has a foundation in these words of the apostle, Col. ii. 11, 12, 13. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ : buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."

"Here the thing signified in baptism is called *the circumcision made without hands*, the same with the circumcision of the heart whereof the uncircumcised in their flesh are now made partakers ; and in place of the circumcision made with hands they are *buried with Christ in baptism*, and so have the circumcision of Christ. Now if the apostle gives us baptism with the thing signified in it, in place of the circumcision of the flesh, and calls it the circumcision of Christ ; then baptism must be to the true Israel who are born of the Spirit, as circumcision was to the typical Israel who are born of the flesh."

This conclusion is expressed in such a manner as will bear a double meaning. If you mean that bap-

tism is the *same thing* to the true Israel that circumcision was to the typical Israel, this will not be granted; for circumcision was to typical Israel an external mark to distinguish them from the Gentiles, and was typical of internal circumcision; but the design of baptism to the true Israel is, to represent the death, sufferings, and resurrection of Christ, and the saints likeness to Christ in them, and their participation of them. Circumcision was hereditary to old Israel, and, by God's appointment, entailed on their fleshly seed; not so baptism to the true Israel. Nor can it be proved that baptism comes in the place of circumcision; for baptism took place among the believing Jews a considerable time before circumcision was abrogated.

But if you mean, that baptism *belongs* to the true Israel, even as circumcision *belonged* to the typical Israel, I heartily agree with you, provided you keep clear and consistent the distinction you have mentioned between the typical and true Israel, *viz.* That the former are *born of the flesh*, and the latter *of the Spirit*. But your very next words confound this distinction, when you say,

—“ And as Peter said to the Jews who were first called to be baptized unto the promise of the Holy Ghost, *the promise is unto you and to your children*, baptism belongs unto the *children* of the spiritual Israel, unto whom that promise is; even as circumcision belonged to the children of the fleshly Israel, who had the promise of Christ to come in the flesh, and of the earthly inheritance.”

In the beginning of this section you told us, the argument for infant-baptism from circumcision was founded on Col. ii. 11, 12, 13. but as that text makes

no mention of infants, you are obliged to have recourse to your former argument from Acts ii. where you would have us believe the word *children* signifies *infants* such as were circumcised; and thus by patching up your premises, you venture to draw your conclusion. But as the argument from Acts ii. has been answered already, I refer you to it, and shall proceed to consider, what you have advanced from Col. ii.

The controversy being about infant-baptism, the main thing to be considered is, whether the infants of believing parents be the true Israel who are born of the Spirit, and so the antitype of Jewish infants, who were the typical Israel born after the flesh; and if it be made to appear that they cannot be viewed in that light, then, according to your own argument from the text, baptism does not belong to infants.

In order to clear this matter, it will be necessary to state more particularly the difference betwixt the typical and true Israel, or the natural and spiritual seed of Abraham. This distinction is copiously handled by the apostle Paul in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, in which he always recurs back to the covenant made with Abraham. This covenant was of a mixed nature, as appears by the promises which it contained. For,

1. Herein God gave to Abraham the promise of a *seed* in whom all nations should be blessed, Gen. xii. 3. and xxii. 18. and this seed was Christ, Gal. iii. 16. In this promise the gospel was reached unto Abraham, ver. 8. and in it lay the object of that faith whereby he and his spiritual seed among Jews and Gentiles were blessed with him, ver. 7, 9. This is that promise which was confirmed of God in Christ, and which the law



could not disannul, or make of none effect, ver. 17. But because God designed to exhibit by, and among Abraham's fleshly seed an earthly pattern or exemplar of the heavenly things contained in this promise; therefore,

2. He made another promise to Abraham in that covenant, *viz.* That he would multiply him exceedingly, and give unto him, and to his seed after him, the land of Canaan, Gen. xvii. 2, 8. This promise was temporal, and it behoved to be accomplished before the other, as it contained the types and pledges thereof. Canaan typified the heavenly inheritance; so the patriarchs understood it, Heb. xi. 8—15. and Abraham's fleshly seed typified his spiritual seed of all nations, Gal. iii. 7, 8, 9. even the children of the spiritual promise, who walk in the steps of Abraham's faith. The difference betwixt these two seeds was typified to Abraham by Ishmael and Isaac in his own family, even as the two covenants were typified by Hagar and Sarah, Gal. iv. 21. Now these two promises laid the foundation of a twofold relation to God; the one spiritual and eternal with Abraham's spiritual seed: the other typical and temporal, betwixt God and Abraham's fleshly seed, which behoved to continue during the period of the typical œconomy, and no longer.

3. The ordinance of circumcision belonged only to the temporal promise, and the temporal typical relation betwixt God and Abraham's seed according to the flesh: for though the covenant to which it belongs be called an *everlasting covenant*, Gen. xvii. 13. yet this must be understood with the same limitation as the earthly Canaan, promised therein, is called an *everlasting possession*, ver. 8. and xlviii. 4. the Aaron-

ical priesthood, *an everlasting priesthood*, Exod. xl. 15. and the yearly typical atonement *an everlasting statute*, Lev. xvi. 34. These temporal types are called *everlasting* in relation to the antitype, in which this epithet holds true.

Circumcision is indeed called, *a seal of the righteousness of the faith*; but it was a seal only to Abraham of his own faith, even the faith which he had before circumcision. This seal he received in his peculiar patriarchal capacity, and that only as father of the faithful; for the apostle says, Rom. iv. 11, 12. "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised:" for what end? "that he might be the father (of whom? of all his fleshly circumcised seed? No: but) of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised;—and the father of circumcision to them (of his natural seed) who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had being yet uncircumcised," i. e. That he might be the father of all that believe, whether circumcised or uncircumcised. Now if Abraham was not a father to his natural seed, *as such*, in that respect wherein circumcision sealed or confirmed to him the righteousness of his faith; then circumcision was not such a seal to his natural seed; nor could it be such a seal to infants at eight days old, who had not that faith before circumcision; but respected only the temporal promise and relation, which promise and relation had a typical reference to the eternal promise, and the spiritual relation arising from it.

When God proceeded to fulfil the temporal promise, he did it by means of a covenant, even that which he made with the whole nation of Israel, when he took

them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, Exod. xix. 3—8. Heb. viii. 9. This is called the *old covenant* (Heb. viii. 13.) on account of the temporal relation betwixt the Lord and that nation, which is now done away.—The *law*, Heb. x. 1. on account of the law therein given to them.—And the *first testament*, (Heb. ix. 15.) on account of the typical adoption, and the temporal inheritance.

It is evident that this covenant, and all its typical œconomy, was founded on the temporal promise made to Abraham concerning his fleshly seed; for all the temporal blessings which Israel enjoyed according to the tenor of the Sinai covenant, are also ascribed to that promise. The Lord refers to it when about to give the typical redemption, Exod. vi. 3—8. Their manifold deliverances from the surrounding nations are ascribed to it, 2 Kings xiii. 23. Neh. ix. 7, 8. and pleaded from it, 2 Chron. xx. 7. Yea, their typical relation to God as his people, wherein the very essence of this covenant consisted, is originally attributed to that same promise, Deut. xxix. 13. As circumcision belonged to the temporal promise and fleshly relation, it was also ingrossed into this covenant, Lev. xii. 3. and so it behoved to vanish away with the covenant itself, and all its other typical ordinances.

When the fulness of the time was come, and God proceeded to fulfil the spiritual promise, he did it by means of another covenant, (by the mediation of Christ) with Abraham's spiritual seed of all nations. This is called the *new covenant*, (Heb. xii. 24.) in reference to the other, which was made old, and the new spiritual relation betwixt God and that new nation, made up from among all nations, kindreds, and tongues.—The *new testament*, (Heb. ix. 15.) on

account of the true adoption and the heavenly inheritance, of which Christ the first-born is both testator and heir.

These are the two covenants of which the apostle speaks in Gal. iv. and Heb. viii. and ix. chapters, and which were both included, by way of promise, in the covenant made with Abraham. The contrast may be more fully stated in the following manner :

#### ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

##### *Old Covenant.*

1. The old covenant was only a *temporal* relation betwixt God and a particular nation, which is now *done away* and come to an end, Heb. viii. 13.

2. The old covenant was *carnal* and *earthly* :

(1.) In its *worship*, which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, Heb. ix. 10.

(2.) In its *sacrifices* of bulls and of goats, which could never take away sin, or purge the conscience, Heb. ix. 9. and x. 4.

(3.) In its *mediator*, viz. Moses, Gal. iii. 19.

##### *New Covenant.*

1. The new covenant is an *eternal* relation betwixt God and his people from among all nations, and is therefore called an *everlasting covenant*, Heb. xiii. 20.

2. The new covenant is *spiritual* and *heavenly* :

(1.) In its *worship*, which requires a true heart, faith, and a good conscience, and to be performed in spirit and in truth, Heb. x. 19—23. John iv. 23.

(2.) In its *sacrifice*, which is Christ, and which perfects for ever them that are sanctified, Heb. x. 14.

(3.) In its *mediator*, viz. Christ Jesus, Heb. xii. 24.



ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

*Old Covenant.*

(4.) In its *priests*, viz. Aaron and his sons, who were sinful men, and not suffered to continue by reason of death, Heb. vii. 23, 28.

(5.) In its *sanctuary*, which was worldly and made with hands, Heb. ix. 1. 24.

(6.) In its *promises*; they being worldly blessings in earthly places, and respecting only a prosperous life in the earthly Canaan, Deut. xxviii. 1—15. Isai. i. 19. Josh. xxi. 43, 45. chap. xxiii. 14, 15, 16.

(7.) In its *subjects*, or people covenanted; they being the fleshly seed of Abraham, children of the temporal promise, related to God as his typical people, and to Christ as his kinsmen according to the flesh; which typical and fleshly relation availed them much for the enjoyment of the typical and earthly

*New Covenant.*

(4.) In its *priest*, viz. Christ, who is holy, harmless, &c. and abideth priest continually, ever living to make intercession for us, Heb. vii. 24, 25, 26.

(5.) In its *sanctuary*, which is heaven itself, whereinto our great high-priest hath entered, having obtained eternal redemption for us, Heb. ix. 12.

(6.) In its *promises*: they being spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and chiefly respecting the life to come, and the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance, Eph. i. 3. Tit. i. 2. Heb. viii. 6. and xi. 16.

(7.) In its *subjects*; they being the spiritual seed of Abraham, typified by the fleshly seed; being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; predestinated unto the adoption of children, and redeemed by the blood of Christ. These are the children of the promise, who, in God's appointed time, are born,

## ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

*Old Covenant.*

privileges of this covenant: but as Hagar, the bond-woman, was cast out with her son born after the flesh; so the covenant itself being antiquated, its temporal, typical privileges vanished, its subjects were cast out and disinherited; the fleshly relation upon which they received circumcision, availed nothing for their partaking of spiritual privileges, nor were they, as children of this covenant, admitted heirs with the children of the free woman, or new covenant, Rom. ix. 4—9. Gal. vi. 15. and iv. 22—31.

*New Covenant.*

not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever: who have the law of God written in their hearts, and all know him from the least to the greatest. Through this work of the Spirit, they believe in the name of the Son of God, and by the profession of this their faith, they appear to be the seed of Abraham, children of the free-woman, and heirs according to the promise, to whom belong all spiritual privileges, and baptism among the rest, Eph. i. 4, 5, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. John i. 13. 1 Pet. i. 23. Heb. viii. 10, 11. Gal. iii. 26, 29. and iv. 28, 31. Acts ii. 41, 42.

From this contrast it appears, that the old covenant made with the whole nation of Israel, and all the things established thereby, were only earthly patterns

of things in the heavens, Heb. ix. 23. figures for the time then present, ver. 9. shadows of good things to come, chap. x. 1. imposed upon the typical Israel, until the time of reformation, chap. ix. 10. under which they were shut up unto the faith that should afterwards be revealed, Gal. iii. 23. So that, abstract from their typical reference, there was nothing spiritual or heavenly in them.

And as this covenant was typical and earthly; so were the covenanted people. Nor was there any necessity of their being regenerated in order to their partaking of its privileges, seeing these privileges were earthly, and suited to men in a natural state: but it was requisite they should be the fleshly seed of Abraham, observe the letter of the law, and have the sign of the covenant in their flesh by circumcision.

Though some of the fleshly Israel were likewise of the spiritual Israel; yet they were not so by their fleshly relation to Abraham, nor by the temporal promise concerning his natural seed, to which circumcision belonged; nor yet by the peculiar typical covenant at Sinai founded thereon: but by an election of sovereign grace, and faith in the notable SEED, the mediator of the new covenant, of which their fleshly relation and temporal covenant was but a type or earthly pattern, Rom. xi. 5, 7. Heb. xi. 13, 39, 40.

As type and antitype hold the same proportion with flesh and spirit, shadow and substance, earth and heaven, we must always keep this distinction in our eye, when running the parallel betwixt Abraham's twofold seed, else we shall be apt to confound those born only of the flesh, with these born of the Spirit. And in this, I perceive, your mistake lies: for your whole argument proceeds upon the supposition, that

the fleshly seed of New Testament believers are as really the spiritual seed of Abraham as the infants of old Israel were his fleshly seed.

But it is absurd to suppose, that the infant seed of Abraham, born of the flesh, did typify the infant seed of believers born likewise of the flesh ; for this would be only one fleshly seed typifying another fleshly seed, and so would not answer to the distinction that must always be held betwixt the type and its antitype. The beasts sacrificed under the law, were not typical of any other beasts to be sacrificed under the gospel ; nor did the old covenant with the fleshly seed, typify that the new covenant should be with another fleshly seed. Unless then we suppose, that shadow and substance, sign and thing signified, type and antitype, are of the same nature and kind, we must of necessity grant, That the natural seed of Abraham, *born of the flesh* according to the temporal promise, typified his spiritual seed, *born of the Spirit* according to the new covenant promise.

As baptism belongs only to the spiritual seed of Abraham, it remains to be considered, what it is that distinguishes them from the world, and gives them a *visible right* to this ordinance.

The fleshly birth sufficiently distinguished the subjects of circumcision ; for this was a thing visible, and the highest evidence that could be had of their being the natural seed of Abraham, to whom that ordinance belonged ; so that Israelitish infants appeared as really to be the natural seed at their birth, as they could do in any after period of their lives. But this is far from being the case with the spiritual seed : for as regeneration is invisible ; so the carnal birth, be it of whom it may, is no proper index to it, nor can they upon that ground receive baptism. Because,



1. That which is common both to the natural and spiritual seed can never distinguish the one from the other; but the fleshly birth is common to both; therefore it cannot distinguish them.

2. That which does not amount to the character of the sons of God, cannot denominate the spiritual seed; but the being born of blood, of the will of the flesh, and of the will of man, (as are the infants of believers as well as others) does not amount to the character of the sons of God, John, 1, 13. Therefore, &c.

3. If the spiritual birth hath no necessary, natural, or fœderal connection with the fleshly birth, then from the fleshly birth we cannot infer the spiritual; but being born again—from above—of the Spirit of God, is neither necessarily, naturally, nor fœderally connected with the fleshly birth; therefore it cannot be inferred from it. Not *necessarily*; for it is the fruit of sovereign free election. Nor *naturally*; for we are by nature children of wrath. Nor *fœderally*; for the new covenant is not made with the natural offspring of believers, as the old temporal covenant was with the fleshly seed of Abraham; nor are we now permitted to know any man after the flesh, 2 Cor. v. 16. or to judge of their spiritual state by their fleshly relation to covenanted parents.

4. The natural seed of believers can no more be counted for the spiritual seed, than the natural seed of Abraham; but the apostle tells us, that the children of Abraham according to the flesh are not, as such, the children of God, nor counted for the seed.

5. Though some of the children of believers are the spiritual seed, it will not follow they should all be counted such; any more than it will follow that

because some of the fleshly Israel were also the spiritual Israel, therefore they were all of the spiritual Israel. And if they cannot all be counted for the spiritual seed, then none of them can be known to be such while infants ; for, in infancy, there is no visible distinction between them.

6. If the scriptures demonstrate, that many of the children of infidels are of the spiritual seed, whilst, on the other hand, many of the seed of the faithful turn out to be infidels, then no rule can be fixed for judging of the state of infants either from the faith or infidelity of their parents ; but scripture and experience demonstrate both these to be facts, as in the case of Ishmael, Esau, and Absalom, and in the rejection of the Jews, and conversion of the Gentiles. Therefore, to judge of the state of infants by the fleshly birth, or by the faith of their parents, is not a scriptural rule.

These arguments serve to show, that the infants of New Testament believers cannot be counted for the spiritual seed, as the infants of old Israel were counted for the fleshly seed ; and that therefore baptism cannot be administered to the former, as circumcision was to the latter, because it proceeds upon the evidence of the spiritual birth.

I shall only mention one thing more upon this part of the argument, viz. That there was a particular, express divine command for circumcising the fleshly seed at eight days old ; but there is neither command nor example in all the word of God for baptizing infants, or any but those who appear, by the profession of their faith, to be the spiritual seed.

I shall now follow you through the rest of this section.

—"For they [infants] are as capable of being

born of the Spirit, as they are of being born of the flesh :”—

*Answ.* Their *capability* is no argument. Do they all appear to be born of the Spirit? Does scripture declare it? Does experience show it?

—“ For who can deny the operation of God upon them, that raised Christ, and begets the adult to the faith, to which they contribute as little as their infants ?”—

*Answ.* No one can deny, that *God can of these stones raise up children to Abraham* ; but you yourself own, that this operation is not actually exerted on all the infants of believers, just a little below, where you say, “ It is true, they may yet be really irregenerate, and when adult appear to be so.” Scripture and experience both show, that they are but the fewest number, even of the children of believers, upon whom this operation is exerted. How trifling and weak then is such reasoning, God is able to regenerate infants, therefore they may be baptized ! According to this argument, all the human race may be baptized ; for God is able to regenerate them.

—“ When it is asked, how can infants appear to be of the spiritual seed ? it may then be asked, how does a parent appear to be such an Israelite upon the very first profession of his faith, by which he is admitted to baptism ?”—

*Answ.* A parent appears to be a true Israelite upon his first profession, because that affords a credible ground to believe, that his profession agrees with the belief of his own heart, and is the index to it : but his profession can never make his infant appear to be of the spiritual seed ; because there is no connection betwixt his profession and the spiritual state of his child,

any more than there is betwixt the fleshly and spiritual birth. The parent does not profess the faith of his child, but his *own* faith; and it is certain, that nothing is made visible by a profession, but that which is professed in it. There is no such thing either expressed or implied in the scriptures, as that infants appear to be the spiritual seed, by their being the natural seed of believers. Abraham had never this honour with respect to his natural seed, though his faith was tried and approved of God the searcher of hearts: how then can we suppose, that professing Gentiles should propagate spiritual children to Abraham by carnal generation, and manifest them to be such by professing the faith in their stead, when he who was the father of the faithful could do no such thing, unless we count the children of the flesh for the seed, contrary to Rom. ix. 8. Gal. iv. 29.? Abraham's spiritual seed walk in the steps of his faith, Rom. iv. 11, 12. and do the works of Abraham, John viii. 39. and thus appear to be his spiritual seed.

You say, "the word of God calls us to acknowledge them the spiritual seed by the parent's profession." Yet there is no such call in all the word, but rather the reverse: "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh," John iii. 6. "They are not all Israel which are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children," Rom. ix. 6, 7.

As for the parent's profession, it can never make his infants appear to be the spiritual seed, though it makes them appear the fleshly seed of a true Israelite: nor can it make them appear the children of the *promise*, who are counted for the seed; for there is no particular promise made to believers (as was to Abraham) that they shall have a seed, and much less \*



*spiritual* seed. But as you seem to ground this assertion upon their being called *holy*, I refer you back to what has been already said on that head.

In the next paragraph you endeavour to shew, that the baptism of infants will not infer their being admitted to the Lord's Supper :

1. Because they are not by this acknowledged as members of any visible church, to which that ordinance belongs ; but only of Christ's true church ; his body, which is invisible.

2. Because the examples of baptism in scripture always preceded adding to a church. And,

3. Because, in short, they must be capable personally to declare their purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord in a church, before they can be admitted as members.

Now though I agree with you in saying, that the instances of baptism in scripture always preceded adding to a visible church, to which the supper belongs, yet your arguments for infant-baptism are as strong for admitting them to the supper : For if we esteem infants members of Christ's true church for which he gave himself, &c. why may they not be admitted as members of a visible congregation, which is a representation in miniature of that true church ? Are they members of that true church where no unclean thing can enter ; and can they not be admitted into a society where hypocrites have, and still do enter ? Do they all partake of the one New Testament altar, and can we refuse them the instituted sign of that altar, the Lord's Supper ? Is not this something like "daring to exclude from the privileges of Christ's kingdom and church communion those who appear to be of the truth ?"

When it is asked, how can infants appear to be members of a *visible church*? it may then be asked, how does a parent appear to be such a member, upon the declared purpose of his heart to cleave unto the Lord in it, by which he is admitted as one? And when it shall be said, That the word of God calls us to acknowledge him as such by that declaration; then it will also be said, (retorting your own argument,) that the same word calls us to acknowledge his infants as such, by that same declaration.

But how come you to speak of qualifications in order to partake of the Lord's Supper, call it a declared purpose of heart, &c. or what you will? Does not "this lead us (according to you) to lay the stress of our salvation upon something that we do in the declaration of our purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord, and some holiness about us whereof infants are incapable?" p. 198. If once you dispense with that personal profession which the scripture requires in order to baptism, you cannot be consistent unless you likewise give up with that personal declaration requisite to church-fellowship and communion in the supper, notwithstanding all your distinctions. But you proceed:

—"Nor if we consider what is now said," (*viz.* against reckoning the baptized to be members of a visible church) "shall we be able to ascribe the corruption of Christianity to the baptism of Christian infants, as it may be ascribed to the *making of Christians by baptism.*"

*Answ.* Your arguments for infant-baptism will equally hold for their receiving the supper, (as hath been shown,) both which are a corruption of Christianity, as there is no foundation for any such practices

in the scriptures; and if these infants you would have baptized be not *made Christians by baptism*, I am sure many of them are not made Christians in any other way, as their after conduct glaringly demonstrates.

—“The corruption of the Christian religion came by departing from the scriptural profession of the faith upon which baptism was administered from the beginning to a man and his house, and by substituting another profession in the room of it; a profession that cannot entitle the professors to the scriptural brotherly love as saints and faithful in Christ Jesus; or as the spiritual Israel.”—

*Answ.* You say right; for to substitute any profession in the room of a personal one, as it is not scriptural, so it can never entitle to brotherly love as saints, and must consequently introduce great corruptions into the Christian religion. And I know not a fitter expedient for corrupting Christianity, or making nominal Christians, than by administering baptism to such as can make no personal or scriptural profession of the faith; but substitute the profession of another in its place:

—“Whereas the true primitive profession of the faith, gives the professor and his house the character of holy, and admits them to baptism: And we see unfeigned faith descending from a parent to her child and grandchild,” 2 Tim. 1, 5.

*Answ.* I have considered the scripture doctrine concerning a believer’s *house* already, as also how his children are said to be *holy*, and have found that it makes nothing for your purpose: but to affirm, that “unfeigned faith descends from a parent to her child and grandchild,” is so manifest a wresting of the scrip-



tures, that I know not what to think of a point which requires such conceits to support it. The apostle's words are, 2 Tim. 1. 5. "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." Here it is evident the apostle does not mean, that faith descended from Timothy's grandmother to himself, by virtue of her being his grandmother (for then it would descend like an estate, or like hereditary qualities in the blood,) but only that Timothy was enlightened in the knowledge of the gospel by the sovereign grace of God, even as his mother and grandmother were before him; which might or might not be the case, notwithstanding their natural relation to each other, as both scripture and experience plainly evince.

—"If the children become adult, not adhering to the baptismal profession, they have no more the character of holy; but then they are no more the infants of believing parents."—

*Answ.* The scripture to which you refer for the character of *holy*, is as applicable to them when become adult, as when infants, and while unregenerated as when regenerated: "but then they are no more the *infants* of believing parents." Very true, Sir, *adults* are not *infants*; but pray, Sir, are not adults *children* in scripture style, though they are not *infants*? Whether does the place you refer to, term them *infants* or *children*? Does a believer's house include none but *infants* in distinction from *adult* children? And whether is this a scriptural distinction, or an imagination of your own? How came you then, without a scripture warrant, to divest them of the character of *holy* upon any consideration, as long as they are the *lawful* children of believing parents?



But though their adult state should discover your error as to the *nature* of that holiness, you are very far from owning it as yours; for you say, "according to the scripture, we must look upon the children of believing parents, dying in infancy, as dying in the Lord." Strange! that you should father such fancies upon the scriptures of truth, when there is not one syllable in all that sacred book that makes the least distinction (with respect to salvation) betwixt those who die in infancy, and those who arrive at maturity. But as you were before obliged to use the distinction of *visible* and *invisible* church, to cut off the connection betwixt baptism and the Lord's Supper: so you are here forced to use the distinction of *infant* and *adult*, to support the credit of that imaginary *holiness*, which you say entitles infants to baptism, but which may vanish away in their adult state like a morning cloud which is dispelled by the rising sun.

Upon the whole, had you entirely dropt the apostolic distinction of the two covenants, and adopted the popular plan of their *identity*, you might have handled the argument from circumcision more consistently than you have done.

I am,

SIR,

Your, &c.

## LETTER VIII.

SIR,

I SHALL now proceed to your fifth section, which shows, *that the apostles minding the Lord's admonition as to infants, and primitive Christians long after them, did not scruple upon baptizing them; and that it was the practice in the first ages.*

In the first part of this section you recapitulate your former arguments, and take it for granted they are conclusive; but as I have answered them already, I shall not stay here upon every particular. You begin thus;

“If we believe Christ faithful as a Son over his own house, we must take the revelation of his mind and will as he is pleased to give it, without prescribing to him the manner in which he should make his will known.”—

*Answ.* We are willing to take the revelation of Christ's mind as he has been pleased to give it; but since infant-baptism has never yet appeared to be any part of that revelation, you must excuse us though we do not take it from men as they are pleased to give it; for it is Christ's will, and not theirs, that we chuse to regard in this matter. We maintain that the revelation of Christ's mind as to the baptism of believers is clear, express, and particular; but as to the baptism of infants who cannot believe, he has said nothing about it, and therefore it can be no institution of his; nor can any reasoning whatever, make it appear to be such. We may indeed deduce *moral* duties

from the nature and relation of things; but *positive* ordinances, (such as baptism is,) which depend entirely on the will of the lawgiver, we know nothing at all about them, nor to what description of persons they belong, but from the plain *enacting words* of such institutions, or approved *examples* of their application. And where both are wanting, there can be no such thing as a positive institution. But you proceed,

—“When the same temper, from which the scruples at infant-baptism now proceed, showed itself in his disciples, he was much displeased at it: The disciples rebuked those who brought infants to him, and their reasons for this could be no other but such as are still used by those who forbid them baptism.”

*Ans.* If Christ's disciples, (who even then baptized more than John did, John iv. 1, 2.) had it in commission to baptize infants, as, according to you, must have been the case; then their reasons could not be the same with ours, who maintain they had no such commission. Or if you imagine the disciples thought infants incapable of Christ's blessing, and so forbade them to be brought, I hope you will not affirm that this is any of our reasons for withholding their baptism. Wherein then do our reasons agree with those of the disciples?

—“And in the foresight of their self-righteous and unmerciful principle touching infants, forbidding them the first sign of union with him and his church, out of which there is no salvation, and perverting the scriptures that show their church membership, he said, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.’

And he took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them.' Thus he secured the church membership of infants before his institution of baptism, and thus he prevented the disputes that have arisen since about infants ; showing himself as the first patron of their cause against disciples opposing their being brought to him."

*Answ.* Here you endeavour to represent the Baptists as self-righteous and unmerciful, and that because they deny baptism to infants : but there can be neither self-righteousness nor unmercifulness in denying what was never commanded to be given, and which when given can be of no advantage to them any more than the Lord's Supper. However we need not be much alarmed at the epithet *self-righteous* when applied by you, as it is your common hackneyed term, which you apply to all serious professors who differ from you. As for what you say of our *unmercifulness* in forbidding infants the first sign of union with Christ and his church, out of which there is no *salvation* ; and of our *opposing* their being *brought to Christ*, though there be not the least argument in it ; yet it serves to affect and stimulate the fondly feeling hearts of parents for their infants, and to secure them by this blind handle to your cause. You are sensible, that the generality of people are more influenced by sound than reason, especially in things that take hold of their passions and natural affections ; and here you avail yourself of this natural feeling of human nature, by alarming parents with the unmercifulness and cruelty of denying their infants baptism ; as if it were like dashing them against the stones, or depriving their souls of salvation. Methinks I see the fond parent drowned in tears at the very thought.



You confidently affirm, that it was in the foresight of the denial of infant-baptism, that our Lord said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," &c. whereas our Lord neither enjoins nor exemplifies their baptism in that place, when there was an opportunity of doing both. But I shall consider the text more particularly.

"And they brought young children to him that he might touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God," Mark x. 13, 14.

Whether those who brought the little children were their parents or not, is not here said. Their *end* in bringing them, we are told here, and in Luke, was, *that he might touch them*; or as Matthew hath it, *put his hands on them and pray*: but there is no intimation of a desire that they should be baptized.

Next we have the *opposition* of the disciples to their being brought. What their reasons were, we cannot tell. It is likely they were intent upon our Lord's discourse of marriage and divorce, and did not chuse he should be interrupted at that time, being, as they thought, better employed in teaching the multitude; not adverting, that our Lord could instruct by the example of a little child, as well as by any other similitude. But whatever were their reasons, our Lord corrects them, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God, or, of heaven," as Matthew hath it.

*By kingdom of God* cannot be understood any particular visible church; this you will readily grant. It must therefore be understood of Christ's true church,

for which he gave himself; and that elect infants are subjects of this kingdom, there can be no doubt; for no circumstances of age or parentage can hinder that. But then it must carefully be noticed;

1. That the children of infidels are as capable of being the subjects of this kingdom, as the children of believers are, for any thing contained in this text.

2. *All* the children of believers are no more the subjects of this kingdom, than *all* the children of unbelievers, as has been already shewn; how then can the subjects of baptism be distinguished among the children of believers? This place makes no distinction of children, either by their parents, or among themselves.

3. As the children of believers are not all of this kingdom; so many of those who are elected to it, are not *actually* called in infancy; but may spend a great part of their days in the course of this world. Thus Paul, though he was separated from his mother's womb; yet it did not please God to reveal his Son in him, till he was on his journey to Damascus. Now baptism does not immediately belong to the elect, *as such*, (for these are only known to God,) but as *actually called*, and *appearing* to be so.

4. Though Jesus Christ, as the great prophet of his church, can *distinguish* his people amongst infants, as well as amongst adults, and *bless* them as he did these children; yet this is no warrant for us to bring the infants of believers *indiscriminately* to baptism, as it is to bring them to him for a blessing.

5. Our bringing them to Christ for a blessing, though a duty; yet it is his to give or withhold, according to his sovereign and righteous purpose; nor can we distinguish who obtain the blessing in infancy; and

though we could, it would be no warrant for their baptism, without a divine command or example; for the blessing and baptism are not inseparably connected, as we may see in this place, where the children were blessed without being baptized.

But if we look a little better into the text we may easily see, that our Lord by these words, *of such is the kingdom of God*, does not only teach us that he blesses such little children as these, and that of such is the kingdom of God; but also that adults must become as little children in simplicity and humility before they can enter his spiritual kingdom. This is evident from the following words, "Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God AS a little child, he shall not enter therein." And this sense is confirmed by a parallel passage, Matth. xviii. 2, 3. "Jesus called a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted and become AS little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." And adds, "Whosoever therefore shall HUMBLE himself AS this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven: And whoso shall receive one SUCH little child in my name, receiveth me: And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which BELIEVE in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Here it is evident our Lord styles these *little children*, who are converted, and resemble such in *humility*, though they be adults in age; for they are described to be such little ones as *believe* in him, and are capable of being *offended*, scandalized, or stumbled: and if we compare this with what the apostle says about

offending the weak brother, Rom. xiv. and 1 Cor. viii. we shall find, that though it will not apply to infants, yet it is a necessary caution against offending Christ's *little ones*, or those who are weak in the faith.

Nor does this sense of the place make our Lord's phraseology any way uncommon; for it was his usual method to convey instruction by similitudes and metaphors, and to use the sign or metaphor for the thing signified. Thus he took bread, blessed it, and said, "This is my body;" and of the cup, "This is my blood of the New Testament;" or "This cup is the New Testament in my blood:" So here, "Suffer little children to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of God," i. e. The kingdom of God is not only of such little children, but they also bear an instructive resemblance of that humility and simplicity which become my subjects. And inasmuch as he blessed them, we are warranted to bring our children to him for the same. But there is no more ground here for the baptism of infants than there is for bringing them to the Lord's Supper. But you proceed:

"The apostles kept this in mind when they executed his commission to them for setting up his kingdom in the world:"—

*Ans.* They kept in mind that his commission to them was first to *teach* (or disciple) and then *baptize* those who were thus *taught*.\*

\* The words, *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them*, &c. Matth. xxviii. 19. is indeed a commission to *teach all nations*; but not to *baptize all nations*; for baptism is restricted to the relative pronoun αὐτοῖς *them*, which is masculine, and does not agree with πάντα τα ἔθνη, *all nations*, which is neuter, but to μαθητάς, *disciples*, which is included in the verb μαθητεύσατε, *teach, or make disciples*. So the sense is, *Teach all nations, baptizing them that are taught, or made disciples by teaching*.



—" For they took in the children with the parents, as we have seen."—

*Answ.* They took in those who professed the faith, whether children or parents, as we have seen.

—" They preached salvation by Christ to men and their houses."—

*Answ.* They preached salvation by Christ to all that had an ear to hear, even to every creature. But what is this to the purpose?

—" They baptized believers and their houses, them, and all theirs."—

*Answ.* They did so, when their houses believed as well as themselves; for this was exactly agreeable to their commission, " He that believeth, and is baptized," &c.

—" And they left Christian infants as holy, so in the possession of this privilege of Christ's circumcision."—

*Answ.* They did not leave them holy in your sense of it; but argued from the principle of their being lawful children, that the marriage relation of their parents (though one of them was an infidel) must have been lawful also. Nor did they leave them in the possession of the privilege of Christ's circumcision, if by that you mean baptism; for as they had not this in their commission, so we find they did not practise it in any of the instances we have of baptism in scripture: neither did they leave any directions about it. And if you can argue from Phil. i. 1. that there ought to be no officers in a Christian church but *Bishops* and *Deacons*, you cannot, with any good grace, hinder me to gather from Acts viii. 12. that none ought to be baptized but *believing men and women*.

I have now followed you through all your rea-

sonings from scripture for the baptism of infants: But were I to judge of your real sentiments by your practice in this matter, I should be led to think, that you hold infant-baptism independent of any arguments you have yet advanced. For when you receive members into your church, you do not object to their baptism, but sustain its validity though they should have received it from the national church of Scotland, of England, or even the church of Rome, all of which you consider as Antichristian. You are no way concerned about their having been baptized according to what you yourself esteem the scripture rule. With respect to their *parents*, you never inquire whether they have been believers, or whether they have ever made the scriptural profession of the faith or not; so that all your arguments grounded on the faith of the parent, salvation to a believer's house, the promise being to him and his children, &c. are laid aside in this case. And as to the *persons themselves*, you do not look upon them as having been disciples, believers, holy, and of the kingdom of God when they were baptized, nor indeed till such time as they personally profess the faith, and apply for admission into your communion. Here then you at once relinquish all your arguments for infant-baptism, none of which are applicable to the present case, which is a common one; and therefore since you sustain the baptism of such as valid, it must be upon some other ground than any thing you have yet advanced from scripture. Do you then hold it independently of scripture authority altogether? If so, it would have been but fair to have avowed this, as it would bring the controversy to a speedy issue. True, indeed, in your first section, you gave up with express precept or indisputable example,

which was in reality to admit that infant-baptism was no institution of Christ, for a *positive* institution cannot be established by mere inference: But, in the above case, you practically depart from all the arguments and inferences on which you ground the baptism of infants, and so can have no shadow of pretence to any scripture warrant whatever. I am,

SIR,

Your, &c.

## LETTER IX.

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SIR,

HAVING followed you through your scripture authorities for infant-baptism, I shall, in this letter, make some reply to what you observe from ancient history. You say,

—"That there was never any scruple moved about it till the end of the second century."—

*Answ.* Because it had no being till about that time, as some of the most learned Poedobaptists ingenuously confess.\*

—"And when we consider the opposition then made to it, we shall see how much it serves to confirm it. We shall see that christian infants were then in possession of the privilege of baptism, and that the first objection made to it arose out of a manifest departure from what the scripture teaches most plainly about baptism, as well as from the scripture doctrine of the grace of God."

*Answ.* If this manner of arguing be of any weight, it can easily be retorted, that the ancient arguments for infant-baptism were founded upon a supposed necessity of baptism to salvation; that it washed away original sin; that the grace of God must be denied to none; and that the sins of infants were easier forgiven than those of adults, &c.

\* See *Vansleb's History of the church of Alexandria*, Part 1. c. 23. *Ludovicus Vives* in his notes on *Augustin. de Civitate Dei*, Lib. 1. c. 27. *Suicerus* in his *Thesaur. Ec. sub Voce Συναξις*. *Curcellæus* in his *Relig. Christian. Institut.* Lib. 1. c. 12. and in *Dissert. secunda de Peccat. Orig.* Sect. 56.



“Tertullian, who wrote in the conclusion of the second century, is the first that moves an objection against infant-baptism.”—

*Answ.* He was amongst the first that had occasion.

—“And he does this when pleading for the delay of baptism even to the adult: for he would have the unmarried professors of Christianity to delay baptism, whether they be virgins or widows, till they either marry or be confirmed in their continency. He pleads for this delay of baptism from the prohibitions to lay on hands suddenly, and to give that which is holy to swine;—and therefore he would have baptism delayed, according to the condition, disposition, and age of each person.”—

*Answ.* It is not my business to defend Tertullian in all his notions. There was certainly no reason why the baptism of unmarried professors of Christianity should be delayed, if they made a scriptural profession of the faith.

—“And he insists for the delay, especially as to infants, arguing for it in this manner, ‘What necessity is here (says he) for bringing the sponsors into danger, who, being themselves mortal, may fail of performing their promises, or may be beguiled by the growth of an ill disposition? The Lord indeed says, *Forbid them not to come to me.* Let them come when they grow up; let them come when they learn; when they are taught to what they should come. Let them be Christians when they shall be capable to know Christ. Why does the innocent age hasten to the remission of sins? We would act more cautiously in secular affairs; that to whom the earthly inheritance is not given, the divine should be entrusted: Let them know to seek salvation, that you may appear to have given

it to one that seeks.' And for the delay of baptism in general, he further says, 'If any understood the weight of baptism, they would rather fear the attaining of it, than the delay. Entire faith is secure of salvation.'

"Now was not this delay of baptism as expressly contrary to the scripture example as any thing can be? and did then the first opposition that we hear of among Christians to infant-baptism, arise out of the scriptures, or out of a plain contradiction to the plainest scriptures? And did not the objection of this forefather of the forbidders of infants to come to Christ, proceed upon the denial of original sin, and the need of remission to infants? And did it not plainly suppose, that our salvation lies in that about us which distinguishes us from our infants; and that it hinges upon a knowledge and a seeking of salvation, and an entireness of faith whereof infants are incapable? If it shall be alleged, that he was not in this a forefather to those few commonly called *free grace Anabaptists*, who are only to be regarded in this question; may we not then say, If these indeed believe, that they cannot enter the kingdom of God, but as the infants enter, he was more consistent with himself than they?"

*Ans.* Though I do not intend to justify Tertullian in every thing; as it is a question whether the doctrine of original sin was clearly understood either by him or many of his cotemporaries; yet I cannot help noticing that you misrepresent his meaning in saying that he forbids infants to *come to Christ*, when he only forbids their *baptism*. You surely can distinguish between coming to Christ and coming to baptism; and do not suppose that *baptism* is Christ, or that the passage you refer to says any thing of baptism. Again

where he says, "Entire faith is secure of salvation," you consider him as maintaining, that "our salvation lies in something about us that distinguishes us from our infants;" whereas he is only pleading for the delay of baptism from its not being absolutely necessary to salvation, (as was then alleged) that being connected with faith, as we find, Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved;" in which place you own,\* the stress is laid on *believing*, and not on *baptism*: so that unless you place salvation in baptism, instead of Christ, and faith in his righteousness, your remark is a mere cavil.

There are others of Tertullian's arguments which have never got a satisfying answer to this day; such as the danger of the sponsors; the necessity of first *teaching* the persons to be baptized to what they should come, and thus engaging them to desire baptism and seek for it, before they obtain it; in which he seems to refer to our Lord's commission, Mat. xxviii. 19.

But it seems the few commonly called *free-grace Anabaptists*, are less consistent with themselves than Tertullian was. How so? Because "they believe they cannot enter the kingdom of God but as the infants enter it," and yet withhold baptism from their infants. But where, in all the world, does this inconsistency lie? Have you yet shown to these Anabaptists from scripture, that infants cannot enter the kingdom without baptism, or have the *thing signified* without the *sign*? Have you pointed out the *particular* infants that enter this kingdom in *distinction* from those who do not, and then shown the scripture precept or example for baptizing such? And can you see no con-

sistency at all in affirming, that many enter the kingdom of God, who never were proper or *visible* subjects of gospel ordinances? Once more; Do you think the profession of faith which the scripture requires in order to baptism, turns the professor's *entry into the kingdom of God* upon *another hinge* than the *entry* of infants, who cannot make that profession? If you do, then the inconsistency lies on your side of the question, in requiring such a profession of the adult. But I refer you back to my second letter for a fuller answer on this head.

Now, Sir, as you have been so kind as to point out to the Baptists their original, it will not be amiss to draw your attention a little to that of the Pædo-baptists.

That infant baptism was very early introduced into the church, is evident from Tertullian's opposition to it about the latter end of the second century; but we have no authentic or distinct account of the grounds upon which it was held, till Cyprian's time, about the middle of the third century, who writes largely in favour of it in his epistle to Fidus, which epistle was the resolution of him and 66 bishops gathered together in council. The reasons for infant-baptism, (and that too before the eighth day) as exprest in that epistle, are as follow;

“ That whereas none is to be kept back from baptism, and the grace of God, much less new-born infants, who, in this respect, do deserve more of our aid, and God's mercy; because in the beginning of their birth they presently, crying and weeping, do nothing else but pray.—The mercy and grace of God is to be denied to none that are born of man; for the Lord saith in the gospel, that the Son of man came not to



destroy men's souls, but to save them; and therefore, as much as in us lies, if it may be, no soul is to be lost; and therefore all infants, at all times, are to be baptized.—If any thing could hinder from obtaining of grace, greater sins should hinder men of years from it; now if greater sins hinder not men of years from it, but that they, when they believe, obtain forgiveness, grace, and baptism, by how much rather is an infant not to be forbidden, who being newly born, hath not sinned, except in that being born carnally according to Adam, he hath contracted the contagion of ancient death in his first nativity, who, in this respect, comes more easily to receive remission of sins, because not his own sins, but another's are forgiven him."

Now, tell me, was not this innovation of infant-baptism as expressly contrary to the scriptures as any thing can be? And did the first arguments that we hear of among Christians in its behalf arise out of the scriptures, or out of a flat contradiction to the plainest scriptures? Did it not proceed upon the doctrine of universal grace; that baptism confers the grace of God; that infants deserve this more than adults, as having no sin of their own, but only Adam's, and therefore more easily forgiven; that they are eminent in devotion, being continually praying in their weeping and crying, &c.? And what is this, think you, but placing salvation in something else than in Christ?

If it shall be alleged, that he was not in this a forefather to the numerous nations of Protestant Pædobaptists, who are only to be regarded in this question: may we not then say, If these indeed believe that the salvation of infants lies *only* and *wholly* in the *thing signified* to the adult in baptism, he was more consistent with himself than they. But to proceed;

About the latter end of the second century, an opinion arose, that without baptism there could be no salvation; whether this error was founded upon a mistaken view of Mark xvi. 16. or John iii. 5. (which were pleaded afterwards) cannot well be determined. However, this principle being once admitted, (as appears from Tertullian's opposition) parents could not but take the alarm, and press hard for the baptism of their infants, lest they should die and be lost before they came to age. But there was one thing that stood in their way, *viz.* the inability of infants to make the scriptural profession of the faith before baptism: but alas! their infants might perish ere they were capable to make this profession, unless some expedient were found out to supply its place. What then could they do in this sad *dilemma*, but substitute cautioners or sponsors to profess and engage for their children? These are the sponsors which Tertullian considers as brought into danger: but the parents were not then admitted as sponsors for their own children, unless they abstained from the marriage-bed ever after; nor did they as yet baptize all infants, but only such as appeared weakly and in danger of death.\*

About fifty years after this, Cyprian and sixty-six bishops gave it the sanction of a council: (for it had then become customary, when any piece of superstition was to be established in opposition to the scripture, to interpose the authority of a council for its more universal reception, though they wanted the civil power to put their decrees in execution.) We have already seen the resolution of this council, and the strange arguments upon which infant-baptism was

\* Gregory Nazianzen. Orat. of Bapt.

founded ; and we may be sure they were no way inferior to those used in Tertullian's time, when it began to be introduced : But it is evident that the arguments of modern Pædobaptists were not as yet invented, at least those of them upon which they lay the greatest stress.

We find likewise that in Cyprian's time they admitted infants to the Lord's Supper, as appears from the story he relates of his giving the communion to an infant : \* and this practice continued in the church for 600 years, till it was at last rejected by a council, as is confessed by *Maldonat* on John vi. Herein they were more consistent than the modern Pædobaptists, for their arguments are equally conclusive for the one as for the other.

There is little account of infant-baptism, from Cyprian's time, till the beginning of the fifth century, when we find Augustine strenuously maintaining it upon Cyprian's authority and principles, *viz.* That infants are damned, by reason of original sin, if they are not baptized ; that baptism regenerates, &c. But it is evident he paid no regard to the faith or intention of those who brought them to baptism ; for he saith, in his 23d epistle to Boniface, “ Neither let that move thee, that some do not bring little ones to receive baptism with *that faith* that they may be regenerated by spiritual grace unto life eternal ; but because they think by this to preserve or receive temporal health : for they are not therefore unregenerate, because they are not offered by them with *this intention* ; for necessary ministries are celebrated by them.”

Though they admitted sponsors to profess the faith ;

\* In his book *De Lapsis* mentioned by Augustine, *Epist.* 23.



yet the sponsor was not to profess his *own* faith, but the faith of the child *itself*; which was done in this manner: The surety being asked, "Doth the child believe?" replied, "He doth believe." Upon which Boniface urgeth Augustine to show, how the sureties could be excused from lying in such an affirmation, and is answered, "He doth believe, by reason of the sacrament of faith." By *the sacrament of faith* he means baptism, and so this is to affirm, that baptism communicates faith to an infant, and that too previous to its being administered; so that, according to this, the infant is qualified for baptism by virtue of baptism itself. Though this is the very height of absurdity, yet we may gather from it, that the argument from the parent's faith was not then invented; that they still wished to keep up the usual form of a personal profession of faith, by the expedient of a sponsor who personated the infant, and obtained baptism for it by telling lies in its name.

Augustine, as well as Cyprian, admitted infants to the Lord's Supper, and pleaded for it from John vi. 53.\*

But after all it would appear, that, even in Augustine's time, infants neither received baptism nor the Lord's Supper but when they appeared weakly, or in danger of death, and they were administered as well for the health of their bodies, as for the salvation of their souls. Augustine's own baptism was deferred till he was upwards of thirty years of age, though educated as a Christian by his mother Monica; and he tells us, "that being young, and falling sick, he desired, and his mother thought to have him baptized, but upon his recovery, it was deferred."† Nor was his

\* *Lib. 1. de peccat. merit. et remis. c. 20.*

† *Tom. 1. Confess. Lib. 1. c. 11.*



own son baptized till he was fifteen, with many others that might be mentioned at that time, which shows that infant baptism came in by degrees, and that it was a long while before it came to be universally practised.

Whoever considers the authority which those forefathers of the Poedobaptists had in the church and the mysticism, ignorance, and superstition of those times, needs not wonder that infant-baptism should spread and be adopted by whole nations ; but it is surprising that it should be carried to the ridiculous length of baptizing whole kingdoms upon the profession and baptism of their kings, though they still remained baptized infidels. If you say you have nothing to do with such a practice, I reply, that the baptism of whole houses upon the profession of the parent's faith, is perfectly analogous to this, and is nothing but a chip of the same block.

To conclude : as you have no foundation in scripture for infant-baptism ; so, though you should search the whole records of antiquity, you will find little to support the modern arguments for it, which rest chiefly upon conceits that have been hatched amongst Protestant Poedobaptists within these three hundred years. I am,

SIR,

Your, &c.

## LETTER X.

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SIR,

I NOW proceed to your APPENDIX, *which contains a dissertation on the manner of baptism, and the scripture sense of the word Baptism.* Here you tell us,

“The opposers of infant-baptism contend likewise for a different manner of baptism from that which is commonly practised: which according to them cannot be called baptism; because it does not at all signify and represent union and communion with Christ in his death and burial by immersion, or plunging, or dipping in water; nor in his resurrection, by emerging or rising up from under the water: and because it does not at all answer to the very sense and meaning of the word *Baptism*, which signifies dipping, immersing, or plunging.”

*Answ.* I suppose you will not deny that the word, βαπτίζω, *baptize*, primarily and properly signifies to *immerse, plunge under, overwhelm*, and also to *dip*; and that where it is put for *washing*, it is used in a secondary, consequential, and more improper sense. If you deny this, you oppose not only the Baptists, and the best lexicographers, but also the plain sense of that word as used in other cases by ancient Greek writers. But then it seems,

“This cannot appear from scripture to be the very sense and use of the word Baptism there;” How so? “For the best way to find the sense of this word, as applied to the case of baptizing Christians, is to ob-

serve how the scripture applies it to other cases ; and by this way the scripture sense of it is found to be *washing*, however that be done ;" and then you produce instances where you think the *washing* of hands, as well as of cups, tables, or beds, &c. is expressed by the word *baptism*.

*Answ.* 1. Here you suppose that in scripture the word *baptism* is used in an uncommon sense to signify any manner of washing, however that be done ; but in this you are very much mistaken ; and as to the washing of hands, it is expressed by *νίπτω*, not *ἐκπνίζω*. Though baptism is sometimes used for *washing*, yet not for every mode of it, but only for such washing as includes immersion. So that you had best keep by the *primary* and *proper* sense of a word, till some circumstances in the text lay you under a necessity of understanding it otherwise ; and this you cannot pretend of *Christian baptism*.

2. It is not denied that these things you mention were *washed* ; but the question is, whether were they not *baptized* or *dipped* in the act of *washing* ? if they were, then the word is properly used still ; and I suppose you will not undertake to prove they were only washed by *sprinkling* or *pouring*.\*

3. According to your own rule, *baptize* must signify to *dip* ; for thus the original theme *βαπτω*, from whence

\* "If the Pharisees touched but the garments of the common people they were defiled, and needed immersion, and were obliged to it." *Maimonides in Misn. chagigah. c. 2. sect. 7.*

"The more superstitious part of the Jews, every day before they sat down to meat, dipped the whole body ; hence the Pharisees admiration at Christ, Luke xi. 38." *Scaliger de Emend. Temp. Lib. 6. p. 671.*

In the Jewish Misnah, or book of traditions, it is said, "A bed that is wholly defiled, a man dips it part by part." *Celim, c. 26. Sect. 11.*

βαπτίζω is a derivative, is applied in other places of scripture ; as in Mat. xxvi. 23. " He that, *εμβαλῶς*, *dippeth* his hand with me in the dish, &c." Luke xvi. 24. " Send Lazarus, that he, *βαφῇ*, *may dip* the tip of his finger in water, &c." John xiii. 26. " He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I, *βαλῶς*, *have dipped* it." Rev. xix. 13. " And he was clothed with a vesture, *βεβαμμενον*, *dipped* in blood."

Your next argument is, That " in the case of Christian baptism, *washing* stands often in the New Testament as another word for it, and as declaring the import and sense of it," of which you give instances from Eph. v. 26. Heb. x. 22. Tit. iii. 5. 1 Pet. iii. 21. Acts xxii. 16. 1 Cor. vi. 11. " From these (you say) it may appear, that according to the scripture use of the word *baptism*, *immersion* cannot be called *baptism*, any otherwise than as it is a mode of washing with water."

*Answ.* That *washing* sometimes stands as another word for *baptism* may be granted ; for a man is washed when he is immersed or dipped ; but that washing in *whatever manner*, is used for baptism, I deny ; for the body is not washed with pure water by *sprinkling* or *pouring* a little of it on the face, as it is by *immersing* or *plunging* it in water. So that though immersion be a mode of *washing* with water ; yet it is not for that reason termed *baptism* ; but because it is that very mode of washing which is expressed by the Greek word *βαπτίζω*, and no other. *Washing* is a general word, which includes various modes, and that of dipping among the rest ; but *dipping*, by which this ordinance is expressed, is a particular mode, and cannot properly include any other.

"The ancients, who added several ceremonies to the simple institutions of Christ, and found out spiritual



meanings to them, amongst other rites added to baptism, used this of *dipping thrice*. But they did not proceed so far, in this way, as to deny, that washing with water in any other way is baptism : for they used *clinic* baptism, and surely baptizing a sick man in his bed, was not burying him under water. Washing with water, then, was from the beginning the sign in baptism, in whatever way, or after whatsoever mode it was done."

*Answ.* 1. What reason have you to find fault with the ancients for *dipping thrice*, since you think any manner of washing will do ?

2. Though they likewise used *clinic* baptism, yet they did not think it a proper rule for ordinary baptism, as you do ; but excused it by the plea of urgent necessity ;\* and they pretended to no evidence for it from the New Testament, but founded it upon the ceremonial sprinklings of the law, and the metaphor used by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxxvi. 25. But still they made a distinction betwixt baptismal washing and the pouring of water upon the sick.† However, if you think the ancient superstitious *clinic* baptism a sufficient warrant for *sprinkling* or *pouring*, it is at your service, though it be among the other ceremonies which they added to the simple institutions of Christ.

You tell us, "the common way of baptizing is not by *sprinkling*, as has been always falsely alleged in this controversy, but by *pouring* water from the hand of the baptizer on the baptized." A very curious distinction indeed ! but what does this make for your purpose ? Why, "if the scripture calls pouring forth

\* Cyprian, *Epist.* 69. *ad* Magnum.

† Cyprian, *Epist.* 69. *ad* Magnum.

the Holy Ghost upon men, baptizing them with the Holy Ghost, then pouring forth water on men, is baptizing them with water, in the scripture use of the word baptism."

*Answ.* So you hold by *pouring* for its similitude to the baptism of the Holy Ghost: (I shall remind you of this in the sequel;) but, according to this manner of arguing, *filling* men with water must be baptism; for they are said to be filled with the Holy Ghost; *giving* men water must be baptism; for the Holy Ghost is said to be given; and *sprinkling* with water (notwithstanding your distinction) must be baptism still; for the ordinary baptism of the spirit is by sprinkling the heart from an evil conscience. Thus baptism with water may be explained to be any thing, every thing, or nothing.

"Christ was baptized with a baptism, which was at his death; but that baptism was by water and blood poured forth from his pierced side upon his dead body; and there was no dipping there."

*Answ.* Was it the issuing forth of blood and water from the pierced side of Christ's dead body, what he precisely meant by his baptism, and that in distinction from what he endured before he bowed the head and gave up the Ghost? If so, it will greatly favour some ancient instances of baptizing dead bodies. But it is evident that the baptism wherewith our Lord was baptized at his death, respected all that he suffered, whether in the garden or on the cross; which sufferings are called baptism, not properly, but metaphorically. The Psalmist useth metaphors of the same import, when speaking of Christ's sufferings, Psal. lxxix. 1, 2. "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in into my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am

come into deep waters, where the floods OVERFLOW me." And was there no *dipping* or *immersing* here? And is not our being buried with Christ by baptism, a fit representation of communion with him in his death and burial, and our rising again from under the water, a proper sign of fellowship with him in his resurrection? Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5. Col. ii. 11, 12, 13. But in opposition to this, you say,

"Our communion with Christ, and conformity to him in his death, burial, and resurrection, is by the renewing of the Holy Ghost," &c.

*Ans.* True; but if you argue against the scripture mode of baptism, because it is not the thing signified; you may likewise argue against every mode of it for the same reason; and thus you will shake hands with the Quakers, who deny baptism with water, because it is not the baptism of the Spirit.

— "But if we look on the will of the institutor expressed in his word as the sole ground of the relation betwixt the sign in baptism and the Lord's Supper, and that which is signified by them; we will not look for any such similitude in these instituted signs as we do in pictures or images,"

*Ans.* You have not yet shewn that it is not the will of the institutor there should be a *resemblance* betwixt the sign and the thing signified. On the contrary, you have endeavoured to shew that there is a *resemblance*, when arguing for the mode of pouring, which you found entirely upon its *resemblance* to the pouring forth of the Holy Ghost upon men; but whether you think it bears the similitude of a picture or image to this, I will not say. In your argument from Col. ii. 11, 12, 13. you affirm, "That in place of the circumcision made with hands, they [Christians] are buried with



Christ in baptism ;” and this you distinguish from the circumcision of the heart, as the sign is distinguished from the thing signified. Now, if there be a burial in the sign, in distinction from the renewing of the Holy Ghost, then that burial must be in water, for the scripture informs us that the sign is water.

— “ Shall we say upon it, that the scripture confines us so to one manner of washing, that another way of it cannot be called baptism ? ”

*Ans.* You can go even this length upon other points, and stand to it with firmness : but here it seems your right arm is weakened, and you are willing to make a coalition that will comprehend all the modes of washing that can be thought on, and unite them in friendly alliance. The only fault you find with *immersion*, is its unsociableness and want of charity to its neighbours. Let me tell you, Sir, this is not agreeable to your usual manner of writing when conscious of truth upon your side, which indicates you have some misgiving of heart about your favourite mode. You allow *immersion* to be one mode of washing ; but then you cannot think to be confined to any one mode of it : But what have you now made of Christ’s simple institution ? And what can the drift of all your arguments be, but to throw the scripture manner of baptism into ambiguity and darkness, that so you may accommodate the ordinance to the tender state of infants for whom it was never intended. But what if after all we should still say upon it, that the scripture has determined the manner as well as the subjects of baptism ; and that the scripture manner is baptism in distinction from any other manner of washing that you may please to use upon improper subjects ?

“ The confidence of some in this matter is the more



unaccountable, that they cannot be ignorant it is impossible to shew, from the particular accounts of the Lord's baptism and the eunuch's, that either of them were baptized otherwise than by pouring water on them from the hands of the baptizers. For if it should be inferred from the eunuch's going down into the water, and coming up out of it, (as it is also said our Lord did,) that he was plunged; the same also must be said of Philip the baptizer: for the words are, 'They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water.' If these words say any thing of dipping the baptized, they say full as much of dipping the baptizer. But to any man that is capable of understanding words, these words plainly say, That being baptized with water is another thing than going down into the water, and coming up out of it."

*Ans.* This paragraph is of a piece with the rest, tending to shew, that there is no certain rule in scripture for the mode of baptism; and this you do by throwing dust upon these circumstances by which the scripture mode is determined, whilst at the same time you can pretend to no foundation in scripture for the mode of *pouring* at all; so that your argument proves nothing; but is an attempt to invalidate all proof whereby the manner of baptism can be determined either one way or another. But this whole paragraph proceeds upon a gross mistake; for we do not affirm, that *going down into the water*, is the same with *baptism* or *immersion*: Philip and the eunuch might go to their necks in water, and yet not be baptized according to Christ's institution. But I ask, why went they down into the water? Was it that the eunuch might have a little of it poured upon him from the hand of

Philip? Certainly not; for this might have been done at the brink, without wetting the soles of their feet; or the eunuch might have been thus baptized in his chariot by a small quantity of it in a vessel. It is evident then that the eunuch was not baptized by pouring of water from the hand of Philip; but in such a manner, whatever it was, as required a depth of water, to obtain which, we find, they went both down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and this, though it was not baptism, yet it was a necessary step in order to it.

Though Philip went down into the water as well as the eunuch, yet he was not thereby baptized; (as he certainly would, had any manner of washing been baptism) but he went down to perform that action upon another. What kind of action then must that be which Philip performed upon the eunuch, and that required they should go both into a depth of water? Can we think the Holy Ghost, in relating these circumstances, had nothing in view but what was incidental and superfluous? No surely; they all concur to ascertain, that the action was *immersion*, as they could be requisites to no other mode; accordingly it is said βαπτισεν, *he immersed him*, Acts viii. 38. which action required, that Philip should take hold of the eunuch, bury him in the water, and raise him up again from under the water. Thus you may see that the circumstances of the eunuch's baptism, tally exactly with the sense of the word βαπτίζω, to *dip, immerse, or plunge*.

Nor were these circumstances any way singular; for our Lord was baptized in the river Jordan, having gone down into it; as is evident from Matth. ii. 16. Mark i. 10. where we are told that, after his baptism,

he came up out of the water. Baptism, or immersion, requires *much water*; “and John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there,” John iii. 23. Whereas, had he used the mode of sprinkling or pouring, he had no occasion to make choice of such a place.

To conclude; the most learned and judicious of the Pœdobaptists, ever since the practice of sprinkling or pouring took place, have ingenuously confessed that the scripture mode of baptism is *immersion*, and the main plea they have for changing the application of water into something else than baptism, is to accommodate it to the tender bodies of infants. Thus we see one deviation from the scripture rule introduces another, till at last the law of God is made void by men’s vain traditions. I am,

SIR,

Your humble Servant.





A  
**DEFENCE**  
OF  
**BELIEVERS'-BAPTISM,**  
AS OPPOSED TO  
**INFANT SPRINKLING:**

In a Letter to a Friend:

*Being an Answer to a Pamphlet, entitled, Remarks on  
Scripture Texts relating to Infant-Baptism, toge-  
ther with some Strictures on Mr. Huddleston's Let-  
ters, and other Writings on that Subject.*



## PREFACE.



About eleven years ago, I wrote an answer to Mr. Glas's Dissertation on Infant-Baptism, in a series of Letters addressed to the author. My chief design was to show the Independents of this country, that infant-baptism, and the arguments which they use in support of it, are not only void of all foundation in scripture, but subversive of their own professed doctrine, upon which they have separated from the national church. No direct reply has been made to this by any in Scotland ; but Mr. Huddleston, pastor of an Independent society in Whitehaven, has attempted something of that kind. To this also a full and particular answer has been written, but not published.

The following pages are written in answer to a recent publication, entitled, " Remarks on Scripture Texts relating to Infant-baptism ;" which I am credibly informed is the long studied

and mature production of an eminent member of the second class of Independents at Glasgow, and therefore may justly be considered as containing the strength of their main arguments on that subject. I know not what others may think of it, but for my own part, were it not that I know the author, I should be ready to suspect that it had been written by some ironical wag on the other side of the question, with a view to expose the cause to ridicule.

The Independents are the ~~most~~ inconsistent of any set of people upon this subject. They admit that the people of the new covenant are distinguished from those of the old, by their having God's law written in their hearts; and all of them knowing the Lord from the least unto the greatest, Jer. xxxi, 33, 34 :\*—That the subjects of Christ's kingdom are distinguished from the world by their being of the truth, and hearing his voice, John xviii. 37 :†—That the spiritual seed are distinguished from the fleshly, by their being born again of the

\* Glas's Works, vol. 1. p. 47.

† Ibid. p. 122, 123.



Spirit by the incorruptible seed of the word, John iii. 5. 1 Pet. i. 23 : \* And that this distinction is only visible to us in the profession of their faith, Acts viii. 37. Rom. x. 9, 10. † But whenever they attempt to establish infant-baptism, they disregard, and some of them even condemn, ‡ such distinctions, and every visible evidence of them, as self-righteous, and resolve the whole into this single question, “ Are they born of believing parents ? ” And though our Lord and his disciples absolutely deny that such birth can distinguish the true children of God as it did the typical, John iii. 5, 6. Rom. ix. 6, 7, 8. 2 Cor. v. 16, 17. yet all this goes for nothing ; they still insist, that their being the natural seed of believers sufficiently marks them out as the children of God, truly holy, and members of the kingdom of heaven. Thus they chime in with the national church upon the great radical point of her *Judaized Christianity*, and, in their baptism, hold a most inti-

\* Glas's Works, vol. i. p. 53. † Ibid. vol. iv. p. 53. 128.

‡ Huddleston's Letters, p. 87, 88.

mate fellowship with her. Perhaps it may be said that they make amends for this, and keep up their separation from the world, by refusing their children church communion till they profess the faith : but this is only adding one inconsistency to another ; and implies, either that they do not believe the principles upon which they baptize them, or that the visible members of Christ's true body are unfit to be members of those societies which represent that body ; than which nothing can be more absurd.

You who know your master's will, in this instance, and do it not, suffer a word of exhortation. You can amuse yourselves with speculations on this point, and clearly show the inconsistency of the opposite practice ; but what have you to say for the consistency of your own conduct ; or how can you justify yourselves to God for trifling with an acknowledged ordinance of the Lord Jesus ? Examine narrowly your motives. Is it because you esteem it a circumstantial point of small moment ? Surely it does not become Christ's disciples thus to estimate any

of his ordinances. The doctrine of believers' baptism is none of the low singularities of a party; it is classed with the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, stands upon the grand foundation of his good confession before Pontius Pilate concerning the nature of his kingdom and subjects, as distinguished from this world, as well as upon the commission he gave his apostles for setting up that kingdom, and corresponds with the whole of their practice and doctrine in executing it.

Perhaps your attachment to your present religious connection entangles you. You have formed this connection, and sat down upon the neglect of the first ordinance of the gospel, and now you cannot think of returning to it. But where do you find an unbaptized church in all the New Testament, or the least warrant for holding communion with such? Are they good Christians? Be it so; but will their Christianity justify your disobedience? Must not each of us give an account of himself unto God? You have charity for them. Have it still; but let it

be the charity of the truth. Can there be any true charity in yielding up a plain ordinance of Christ to the blindness, prejudice, and perhaps perverseness of men? According to this, the more of them we yield in this way, the greater must be our charity. But true charity can never clash with our obedience to any of the laws of Christ, nor lead us to soothe others in the neglect of them; on the contrary, it will influence us to study their true interest, and set their duty before them both by word and example. Disentangle yourselves therefore from the ensnaring influence of such a connection. Hear the words of Jesus, which he proclaims to all men, and let each of them have their proper weight; “He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.”—Hear his command to all who regard his authority; “And now, why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.”

*Edinburgh, May 29, 1777.*



A  
**DEFENCE**  
OF  
**BELIEVER'S-BAPTISM, &c.**

*In a Letter to a Friend.*



DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED your favour, inclosing a pamphlet entitled “Remarks on Scripture Texts relating to Infant-Baptism.” But I think you might have excused me from writing an answer to it, since all that is therein advanced has been more than sufficiently refuted in my Letters to Mr. Glas, Reply to Mr. Huddleston, and View of the Prophecies, which you have seen. Besides, when people allow themselves (as this author hath done) to launch forth into the regions of fancy and conjecture, it is like hunting an *ignis fatuus* to trace them in all their vagaries. I find he aims a stroke now and then at my letters to Mr. Glas, and seems to be a little warm when he says, “What are we that we should withstand God by refusing baptism to children? \*—We deceive the hearts of those who believe without proper evidence, and blind the minds of those who receive not the simple sayings of Jesus;” and he represents us as men destitute of “sound and sober minds.” † This is a very heavy charge; but as it does not reach conviction to me on the one hand, so neither does it excite my resentment on the other: Yet I sincerely lament that he and his brethren should be so

\* Page 10.

† Page 15. note.

much bemisted about the subjects, manner and import of baptism, which cannot fail to corrupt their views of other important truths.

This small pamphlet, I see, is divided into four parts, and each part contains a proposition, with its proof or illustration. I shall therefore follow his method, and begin with

## PART I.

“The little children who make up the kingdom of God, as it appears in this world, may be *distinguished* from other little children.”

For proof of this he adduces Mark x. 13, 14. “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. Bnt when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.” Now, for my own part, I cannot see the least affinity betwixt this text and the above proposition.—These particular little children were indeed highly distinguished by Christ’s taking them in his arms and blessing them; and we learn from the passage this comfortable truth, that of such little children is the kingdom of God; but it speaks not a word about how one little child may be *distinguished* from another as belonging to that kingdom, which is the thing affirmed in the proposition. And here the matter should rest; but I am obliged to follow him through four observations, or rather imaginations upon the words.

*Obs. 1.* “Jesus here supposeth, that the little children who make up the children of God, may be distin-

guished from other little children."—But where do we hear him supposing this?—"This much," says he, "is implied in the words, *OF SUCH*."—That is, we may suppose from these two words, if we please, that he supposeth it; and having converted this supposition of a supposition into a certain truth, he lays it as a foundation principle to build upon.—"From this," says he, "we learn, First, That they were the children of visible believers, for one little child cannot be distinguished from another, but as connected with its parents."

It is probable that those who brought the little children believed at least that Jesus was as capable to bless them as Jacob, Moses, or any other prophet; but how does the words *OF SUCH*, or any other words in the text, teach us that little children may be distinguished as of the kingdom of God by their connection with their parents? Our Lord says not a word about their parents, nor does he give the least hint, that they are to be distinguished by their connection with believing parents, this being only a figment of the author's own brain; so that if, as he owns, they cannot otherwise be distinguished, it follows that they cannot be distinguished by us at all. But surely he will allow, that Christ can distinguish them, as in the instance before us, whether they are connected with believing parents or not.

Another thing, he says, we learn from the words is, "Secondly; That Christ is here speaking of the kingdom of God as it appears in this world." That is, he is not speaking of the kingdom of God as it consists only of the elect and saved, but as it *appears* in this world to men, and is composed of foolish as well as wise virgins, Matth. xxv. 1—13. of bad as well as

good fishes, chap. xiii. 47—50. But here he flatly contradicts the account which Jesus himself gives of the kingdom in the very next verse. “ Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein,” Mark x. 15. Luke xviii. 17. or, as it is expressed in a parallel passage, “ Except ye be CONVERTED, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,” Matth. xviii. 3. which is of the same import with what he says to Nicodemus, “ Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.—Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” John iii. 3, 5. Since therefore our Lord explains himself, and tells us that infants belong to that kingdom of God, which none can enter but such as are converted, born again, and receive it as little children, how comes our author to say, that he is here speaking of the kingdom *as it appears in this world*, into which hypocrites and false professors may and do enter? Doubtless our Lord knew his own meaning best, and since he hath condescended to explain it, it does not become us to contradict him. Let it therefore be noticed, once for all, that Jesus is not here speaking of the *appearance* of his kingdom in this world, but of its *invisible reality*, for to this only is conversion and the new birth absolutely necessary. His next observation is,

Obs. 2. “ He (*viz.* Christ) saith more on this occasion than is allowed by some who *call* themselves his followers. He saith, that the kingdom of God is of such little children, as the young children that were brought to him.”—But we are so far from disallowing this, that we hold it in a higher sense than the author seems to allow. We maintain, that the kingdom of



God, as it is *invisible* and *unmixed*, is of such little children as those brought to Christ, and that all *such* shall certainly be saved; whereas he only pleads, that they belong to the *appearance* of it in the world, and that many of them may fall short of salvation.\* He observes that our Lord's words are not, "Such are of the kingdom of God," but "Of such is the kingdom of God." I own, however, that I am rather too dull to comprehend this distinction; for I suppose the kingdom of God is *of such* as are *of it*.

Obs. 3. "He here supposeth that his disciples might have learned, from the revelation of God which they then had, that the kingdom of God is of such little children as those brought unto him; for the disciples could not be in fault if they were not acting contrary to divine revelation; and he mentions this as the revealed truth which they acted in opposition unto, Of such is the kingdom of God."

That the disciples were faulty in rebuking those who brought the young children to him is plain; and that they acted contrary to a prior divine revelation, is also clear from Mat. xviii. 2—5. Mark ix. 36, 37. Luke ix. 47, 48. where, a considerable time before this, he had taught them, that little children were of his kingdom, and so not to be despised. After this revelation, it was certainly wrong in the disciples to hinder such being brought to Christ in the days of his flesh, even as it would be sinful in us to forbid any to pray for his blessing upon infants, now he is in heaven: but what is all this to the point?

"From this," says he, "we understand, First, That these words of Christ are the public interpretation of

such passages of the Old Testament scriptures as these, Psal. lxi. 36. and cii. 28. Isa. lxi. 9. and lxxv. 23. Jer. xxx. 20. Ezek. xlvii. 22." In these passages much is said of the seed, offspring, or children of the church, and here the author would have our Lord's words to explain these children of *infants* in distinction from adults, and of the infants of *New Testament believers* in distinction from all other infants. But neither does Christ's words here refer to such passages, nor do the passages themselves speak of children in respect of their being *infants* or the *natural seed* of New Testament believers; but in respect of their being children of the church, which consists both of Jews and Gentiles, the natural seed of believers and of unbelievers, even all of each of these who belong to the election of grace. This I shall briefly demonstrate.

It must be admitted, that the children spoken of in the forementioned passages, are the very same with those spoken of in Isa. xlix. where we find Zion, upon the infidelity and rejection of the fleshly seed of Abraham, complaining of her desolate, childless, and forsaken situation. "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me," ver. 14. To this a most comfortable answer is given from ver. 15 to 20. Then the Lord proceeds to comfort her with respect to her children; "The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other," (i. e. after the Jews shall be cast off,) "shall say again in thy ears, The place is too strait for me; give place to me that I may dwell," verse 20. At this unexpected and numerous progeny, Zion is represented as wondering and indeed the New Testament shows how much surprised the believing Jews were when they saw the accomplishment of this; see Acts x. 28, 45. chap. xi. 8.

and therefore there is a question about it in the prophecy as a mysterious and puzzling matter to Zion. "Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold I was left alone, these where had they been?" verse 21. To this it is answered, "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers," &c. verse 22, 23. *q. d.* I will cause the gospel to be proclaimed to the Gentile nations, and will beget children to thee from among them by the word of truth. As to their natural birth, up-bringing, and outward privileges, be not concerned about these, for I will cause the heathen to perform these offices to thy children, and make the kingdoms of the earth as so many nurseries, and their kings and queens to be nursing-fathers and mothers to them in common with their other subjects.

In Isa. liv. 1—8. the church is again comforted with the promise of a numerous offspring. We can be at no loss to understand what church is here meant, for the apostle applies the first verse to the Jerusalem which is above, and the mother of all God's children, Gal. iv. 26, 27. which was typified by Sarah the free-woman: and, as when Sarah was for a long time barren, till she was past age, and her womb dead, God promised that she should be blessed, and be the mother of nations, Gen. xvii. 16. so her antitype is here addressed, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst



not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord," ver. 1. *q. d.* However desolate, forsaken, and barren thou mayest at present appear by the unbelief of the Jews; yet thou shalt bring forth a much more numerous offspring than the earthly Jerusalem, married to me by the Sinai covenant, and typified by Hagar the bond-woman. Therefore she is commanded ver. 2. to make room for her numerous family, by enlarging the place of her tent, &c. That she might not doubt of this on account of her widowhood, it is said to her, ver. 5. "Thy Maker is thy husband, (the Lord of Hosts is his name,) and thy Redeemer the holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called;" and that in distinction from his being the God of the Jews only, (Rom. iii. 29.) so that it is the Lord, the church's husband, that begets these children to her by the word of truth, (Jam. i. 18.) and hence it is said, ver. 13. "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." This last verse is cited by our Lord, and he explains these children to be, "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father, and cometh unto him," John vi. 45. The apostle also explains this prophecy thus; "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all: for it is written, Rejoice thou barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry aloud, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband." And if we enquire what kind of children these are; he answers, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, ARE THE CHILDREN of promise:—So then, WE are not the children of the bond-woman, but of the free: i. e. We believers in Christ are the children promised in the prophets to



the Jerusalem above, the antitype of Sarah the free-woman, Gal. iv. 26, 27, 28, 31.

Here then is the New Testament key, or public interpretation of the prophecies respecting the children; from which it is plain, they are not called *children* on account of their nonage, or *infant state*: for Paul and those he writes to were not children in that respect; yet, says he, "We are the children." Nor are they so called on account of their *natural birth*; for the Jerusalem which is above brings forth no children by that kind of birth; yet he says, she is "the mother of us all;" and the nature of their birth is fully explained, John i. 13. chap. iii. 3, 5, 6. James i. 18. 1 Peter i. 23. Neither is it because they are the *seed of believers* that they are called children; for those to whom the apostle applies these prophecies, were mostly the seed of heathen infidels and idolaters.

But those who are not satisfied with the apostolic explication of the prophecies, may pun upon the prophetic style, and plead, That the prophecies speak not only of the children of Zion as such, but also of *their* children, in such expressions as these:—"The children of thy servants—their seed—their children," &c. and so must respect not only believers, but also their natural seed. In answer to which, I observe,

1. That these promises were all made, in the first instance, to the Jews. They were delivered by their own prophets, and addressed to that people in particular, who were the maternal church, among whom God had not only a typical people, but also a remnant according to the election of grace, who believed and embraced the promises, and waited for the consolation of Israel. The apostle tells us expressly, that to them, "belonged the covenants and the promises," Rom. ix. 4.

and that in distinction from the Gentiles, whom he describes as at that time "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise," Eph. ii. 12. Peter addressing the Jews, tells them, that *they* were the children meant in the prophets, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers," Acts iii. 25. and he shows the convicted Jews, that the promise of the extraordinary effusion of the Spirit mentioned in Joel, was also primarily made to them. "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call," Acts ii. 39. (For Peter knew not as yet that the Gentiles should receive the Holy Ghost, till he learnt it afterwards in the instance of Cornelius, chap. x. 44, 45.) Accordingly we find,

2. That these promises had their *first accomplishment* among the Jews. Christ's personal mission was only to them, as he declares himself; "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." These he calls the *children*, in distinction from the Gentiles, whom he styles *dogs*, Mat. xv. 24—28. Hence also during his personal ministry on earth, he forbids his apostles to go into the way of the Gentiles, Mat. x. 5, 6. and even after his resurrection, when he extends their commission to *all nations*, he commands them to preach the gospel *first* unto the Jews, Luke xxiv. 47. This the apostle says was *necessary*, Acts xiii. 6. and the necessity of it is explained, Rom. xv. 8. "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers;" i. e. he had his personal mission to the Jews to display God's faithfulness in accomplishing his promises to their fathers. Peter having told them, that they were

the children primarily intended in the prophets, and in the promise of the new covenant, shows the fulfilment in these words, "Unto you *first* God having raised up his Son, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities," Acts iii. 25, 26. And Paul addressing the Jews at Antioch, says, "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the FATHERS, God hath fulfilled the same unto US THEIR CHILDREN," &c. Acts xiii. 32, 33. Thus it appears that the promises made unto the Jewish *fathers*, had a primary respect unto THEIR CHILDREN, as they are called in the prophecies; yet not unto *all* their natural children *as such*, for then it behoved that whole nation to be saved; but only unto a *remnant* of them according to the election of grace, even as many of them as the Lord should *call, bless*, and *turn from their iniquities*, as the apostle explains it. But,

3. In the prophetic style, old Israel are not only called *fathers*, in respect of the elect among the natural children, but also in respect of Gentile believers, who are likewise reckoned *their children*. For proof of this, see Jer. xxxi. 31. 32. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with THEIR FATHERS in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt," &c. Here those with whom the Lord made the old covenant are called the FATHERS of those with whom he promises to make the new covenant in Christ's blood, and which includes believing Gentiles as well as Jews. They are likewise so called in the New Testament. In Heb. iii. and iv. the apostle proves at large, that the



address, Psal. xcv. 7, 8, 9. respects the New Testament church, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation—when YOUR FATHERS tempted me," &c. Here old Israel are called the FATHERS of the people of God for whom the heavenly rest remains; that is, the spiritual seed of all nations, who believing enter into rest. Again, writing to the Corinthians, he says, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all OUR FATHERS were under the cloud, and passed through the sea," &c. 1 Cor. x. 1. where we find old Israel styled the FATHERS, not only of Paul, who was a Jew, but also of the believing Corinthians, who were Gentiles.

Now it is plain they were not *fathers* by natural generation to the greater part of those called their children; but they are so called as being the maternal church, and chiefly, because of *them*, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, Rom. ix. 5. of whom springs the New Testament church, his seed, Isa. liii. 10, 11. God's children, Heb. ii. 13. Christ was a SON of the Jewish church; unto them he was in a peculiar manner "a CHILD born, and a SON given," Isa. ix. 6.; but unto the New Testament church he is promised as (ὁ πατήρ μελλόντος αἰῶνος) "the FATHER of the future age," ver. 6. So that what the apostle argues, (Gal. iii. 29.) "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed," will in like manner hold here; if they are Christ's children, then are they the children of ancient Israel, seeing Christ sprung from that nation as the seed of Abraham; and they are as properly so called, as Christ's throne is styled "the throne of his father David," Isa. ix. 7. Luke i. 32.

Gentile believers are never spoken of as FATHERS,



but as CHILDREN; and the apostle represents them as naturalized and adopted children into the commonwealth of Israel, to which they were formerly strangers and aliens, Eph. ii. 12—21. He also represents them as branches of the wild olive tree, and grafted among the natural branches, (*viz.* the believing Jews,) into the good olive tree, and with them partaking of its root and fatness, and standing therein by faith, Rom. xi. 17—25. For these and other reasons that might be mentioned, old Israel are called the *fathers* of New Testament believers, whether they be Jews or Gentiles; and such, on the other hand, are called their *children* and *children's children* in the prophecies. In a word, these promises are made to old Israel as *fathers* respecting *their children*, *viz.* such of their natural seed as should believe the gospel, together with all such as should be adopted into the household of God from among the Gentiles. But to return to our author.

*Obs. 4.* “He here supposeth that his disciples might have justly inferred from this revealed truth “Of such is the kingdom of God,” that they should not hinder these little children from being brought unto him; although it be not said in the Old Testament scriptures, that such little children or any other little children, were to be brought to him in the days of his flesh; nor do we find he had before told it to them.”

I have answered this already, and shown that he had before told it to them. See Matth. xviii. 2—5. and its parallels; and this the author also acknowledges;\* so that our Lord was not so obscure a teacher, nor did he leave so much to be made out by

\* Page 8.

the dint of their reasoning faculty, and fallible inferences, as this writer imagines.

But what he adds deserves our particular notice.—  
 “ And we may, with the same justice and propriety infer from the same truth, that the little children distinguished from others, as the little children brought to Christ were, on account of their connection with believing parents, should be baptized in his name; seeing baptism is appointed by him to be a sign and token of a person’s belonging to the kingdom of God as it appears in this world.” That is, in short, if the disciples might infer from what Christ had *plainly told them*, that they ought not to forbid infants to be brought unto him; then may we, with equal justice, infer from what is *no where told us*, that they ought to be baptized: For it ought to be noticed, that this last inference is drawn from the following groundless fancies, *viz.* 1. That infants belong to the kingdom of God as it *appears* in this world: 2. That such infants are distinguished from others by their *connection with believing parents*: and 3. That baptism is the *sign* of a person’s belonging to the kingdom of God as it is *visible*. The first two of these I have already confuted. The last seems to throw a reflection upon our Lord for not causing these infants to be baptized; seeing, (if we believe our author,) he had appointed it to be the token of their belonging to his kingdom, *as it appears in this world*.

But what passage in all the word of God declares this to be the signification of baptism? When I look into the New Testament for the signification of that ordinance, I find that it is a sign or token of the remission of sins through the blood of Christ, Acts ii. 38. chap. xxii. 16—of the sense of this communicated to

the conscience, 1 Peter iii. 21. Heb. x. 22—of our fellowship with and conformity to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, by dying unto sin, and living unto righteousness, Rom. vi. 4—7. Col. ii. 12.—and of our resurrection from the dead unto eternal life, 1 Cor. xv. 29. But there is not the least hint given in all the scriptures, that it is “appointed to be a *sign* and *token* of a person’s belonging to the kingdom of God, as it *appears* in this world.” It cannot indeed be administered to any till they *appear to men* to belong to the kingdom of God by the profession of their faith; but it is not the token or sign of this *appearance*; but of the *spiritual, eternal, and invisible blessings* of the kingdom, as has been shewn.

It is a most unworthy view of this ordinance to hold it only as a token or sign of *appearances* or *visible* things. Sorry am I, that those who have separated from the national church upon the doctrine of the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, and in order to follow the footsteps of the apostles and first churches, should yet fall so far short even of the national doctrine itself, as to the signification of the very first ordinance of Christ’s kingdom. The Assembly’s Shorter Catechism admits, that baptism “doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord’s,” Quest. 94. and although I am not very fond of human standards, yet I would recommend to him, Quest. 165. of the Larger Catechism upon this subject, particularly its scripture proofs, that, before he pretend to teach others, he may himself yet learn from these systems he hath set aside, which be the first principles of the oracles of God with respect to the signification of baptism; for it plainly appears he hath lost sight of its meaning altogether.



To make baptism a sign or token of our being *visible* subjects of the kingdom, or a figure of our being *visibly saved*,\* is not only a style unknown in the scriptures, but a sentiment in every respect absurd, as it makes it a sign of what is as *visible* as itself, and so an useless sign; a sign too of that which is but the *appearance* of another thing, *viz.* of our being *real* members of the kingdom as it is invisible; and so he makes it a sign of that which, in itself, is of little consequence; for what does it avail our being *visible subjects* of the kingdom, or *visibly saved*, if we are not *really* so? No wonder those who have such unworthy views of this divine ordinance, should hold it as a matter of indifference whether they themselves have been baptized according to their own doctrine or not.† But,

\* Page 24, 25.

† A certain preface writer, who seems to be much displeased with all the Independents who follow not with him in his uniformity, among other things, blames some of them for "forbearing and calling brethren, those who deny infant-baptism." *Pref. 10. Glas's Testimony*, last edition, p. 27.

They may defend themselves from this charge as they are able; but certainly they are as consistent in this, as he is in adopting and sustaining for baptism the sprinkling of the antichristian church, contrary to all the scripture grounds upon which he professedly holds it. I am credibly informed he has nothing to say for this, but that baptism being administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, it must for that reason be valid, be the administrator parent, or subject, what they will. But if the naming, or calling over them this name, sanctifies an unscriptural baptism, then the sons of Sceva may be justified in their attempt to cast out devils, since they also made use of the name of Jesus whom Paul preached, Acts xix. 13. He will not plead, that the clergy of the national church have any better authority to baptize than those exorcists had to cast out devils, since he considers them as worshippers of a false God, and to be the locusts which ascend out of the bottomless pit, whose king is Abaddon or Appollyon, and whose commission is only to hurt men,



in opposition to all this, baptism is a sign or token of a person's belonging to that true church which Christ hath loved, and for which he gave himself, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," Eph. v. 25, 26.

Further, the baptism of infants is so far from being

Rev. ix. 3—12. See *Glas's Works*, vol. ii. p. 399—403. first edit. Neither can he, consistently with his principles, admit, that the infants sprinkled in the national church are the children of believing parents. Perhaps he will tell us, that though the vessels of the temple were prophaned at Babylon, yet they were afterwards used in the Lord's service: and so the sprinkling of improper subjects by the locusts of the national church, must still be held sacred among Christians, and sustained for scripture baptism!!!

Giving a sketch of Mr. Glas's leading sentiments with respect to the subjects of the kingdom of Christ, he says, "That men (according to John i. 13.) do not become sons or children in this kingdom by blood, or descent from religious ancestors—but WHOLLY OF GOD, through the power of his word—merely by the influence of the word of God upon their consciences, coming to them not in word only, but with power, and with the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance," &c. &c. Pref. p. 11, 12. Yet, in opposition to this, I suppose he will agree with Mr. Glas, that infants are born holy, and of the kingdom of heaven; and that they must be looked upon as sons or children in this kingdom by their connection with religious ancestors or parents, and not through the power of the word, or the influence of it upon their consciences.

He professes to be extremely happy in his present connection; yet he discovers not a little uneasiness to find men in any measure professing the truth without acknowledging Mr. Glas as their teacher, and giving him the glory; as if that author had been the original inventor of the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, and had by patent monopolized it to himself and his party. It would not be difficult to shew, that there are few sentiments of any consequence in Mr. Glas's works, that are not to be found in the writings of other clergymen before his time; and I am sure the best of his sentiments are to be found in the scriptures, which, blessed be God, lie open to every one. I do not say this to depreciate Mr. Glas's writings, to which I myself have been indebted in many things; but to expose the vanity of glorying in men.

a just and proper inference from any thing contained in this passage, that it is a clear example of the contrary : for here are children brought to Christ, declared of his kingdom and blessed, and thus became visible subjects ; yet we read nothing of their baptism. We are sure that Christ did not baptize them, for he baptized none, John iv. 2. and it is certain that his disciples had not baptized them formerly, else they would not have forbid their being brought to Christ ; nor did our Lord command them then to baptize them, though he declares them of his kingdom, and blesses them. Hence we learn, that infants may be acknowledged to be of the kingdom of God without baptizing them.

“ *Conclusion.* What are *we* then that we should withstand God, by refusing baptism to the children who are declared by our Lord to make up the kingdom of God, as it appears in this world ?”—This conclusion (as he calls it) is very awful, and had need to be well supported. Let us therefore recapitulate the different suppositions upon which the charge of withstanding God is founded. And, first, he supposes from our Lord’s words, that he meant we should suppose, that the little children who belong to his kingdom *may be distinguished* from other little children who do not belong to it ; because he says, ‘ Of such is the kingdom of God.’—Next he supposes him to mean, (though there is not the least hint of it,) that this distinction is known by their *natural connection* with believing parents, for this good reason, because he knows of no other way one little child can be distinguished from another : Upon this head he also conjectures, that Jesus refers us to the prophecies to find out his meaning, and that these prophecies respect the carnal seed of New Testament believers.—Lastly, he supposes him to mean,

that infants belong to the kingdom of God *as it appears in this world*, into which hypocrites do enter, though Jesus tells us in this and the parallel places, that they belong to that kingdom into which none can enter without being converted.—From all this flimsy cob-web, which he hath spun out of his own imagination, he draws an inference, that infants ought to be baptized; though we do not find that either Jesus or his disciples baptized these or any other infants, or gave the least hint of any such thing. Then, as if he had demonstrated his point as clear as a proposition in Euclid, he asks, ‘What are *we* that we should withstand God?’ But may I be permitted to ask, What is *he*, that he should father his own dreams upon the scriptures? Surely he has not not duly considered the repeated prohibition, and its dreadful sanction, recorded in Deut. iv. 2. Prov. xxx. 6. Rev. xxii. 18.

In his conclusion he also says, “There appears from this to be no room for the disciples of Christ to inquire whether there were little children in the households that were baptized by the apostles, when the heads of them made profession of the faith of Jesus.”—But I cannot think that what he has already advanced is so exceedingly conclusive, as to preclude all farther inquiry into that matter. We have no occasion absolutely to deny that there were infants in those houses, (though it is at best but a mere conjecture;) for the scripture sometimes mentions *all* the house, when only the adult part of it is intended. Thus it is said, *all* the house of Millo gathered together and made Abimelech king, Judges, ix. 6. yet none will affirm that infants had any hand in this. In like manner, when it is said, He “feared God with *all* his house,” Acts x. 2—“they spake unto him the word of



the Lord, and to *all* that were in his house," chap. xvi. 32.—"he rejoiced, believing in God with *all* his house," ver. 34—"Crispus believed on the Lord with *all* his house," chap. xviii. 8. we are sure, that, if there were any infants in those houses, they must be excepted in such passages, for this plain reason, that infants can neither be said to fear God, hear the word, believe, or rejoice in it. And if they cannot be included in the *all* who *believed*, &c. neither can they, by any rule of reasoning, be included in the *all* who were *baptized*; for that word is not more comprehensive in the latter than in the former case, and the connection demonstrates that the same persons are intended in both.

If any, however, will contend, that the word *ALL* signifies every individual in those houses, without exception, we have no objection; but then they must at the same time allow, that every individual of them were *believers*, and this leaves no room to suppose that there were any infants in those houses. The author therefore may chuse any of these suppositions he thinks proper, it being of no consequence in this argument. He hath, however, taken the easiest method of getting over those houses of any writer I ever read on the subject. His talent lies in suppositions; and as one supposition is as easily made as another, he takes it for granted that our Lord's words, Mark x. 13, 14. clearly suppose, that there were infants baptized in these houses upon the profession of the parents; the very stating of which is a sufficient answer.

Others, however, convinced that no argument for infant-baptism can be drawn from those houses, whilst some stubborn texts stand in the way, have, without much ceremony, violently bended them to their own



purpose. I shall give a few instances. The sacred historian tells us, that Cornelius was "A devout man, and one that feared God WITH ALL HIS HOUSE," Acts x. 2. Not so, says Mr. Huddleston; none in Cornelius's house feared God but himself.\*—Of the same house of Cornelius, together with some of his kinsmen, it is written "The HOLY GHOST fell on all them which HEARD the word," ver. 44. and Peter says, "God purified their hearts by FAITH," chap. xv. 9. But the above author tells us, that there is no account "of the house of Cornelius, hearing, believing, or receiving the Holy Ghost,"† and that "it cannot be affirmed in the fear of God, that he had any house else but little children."‡—Of the Jailer and his house it is also written, that Paul and Silas "spake unto him the word of the Lord, AND TO ALL THAT WERE IN HIS HOUSE." Chap. xvi. 32. This he also flatly contradicts, by denying that "Paul and Silas had any other hearer from the Jailer's house besides himself."||—We are further told that the Jailer "rejoiced believing in God WITH ALL HIS HOUSE," ver. 34. but Mr. Glas assures us, there was no such thing; that none in the Jailer's house believed in God but himself, and that his rejoicing was not in God, but in the whole house.§

\* Hudd. Letters, p. 54. † Ibid. ‡ Page 22. || Page 56.

§ His words are, "It is said, ver. 34. that he believed; and there is no mention of any other believing but himself. The text says, That he believed God, rejoicing in the whole house; *ηγαλλιασματο πανοιχι*; as Rom. xii. 12. *τη ελπιδι χαιροντες*, "rejoicing in hope." This joy is his who fell down before Paul and Silas—It was he that rejoiced believing in God," *Glas's Works*, vol. ii. p. 129.—But in opposition to this uncouth criticism, I shall demonstrate, even to the conviction of the English reader, that the adverb *πανοιχι* (of *πας* all, and *οιχος* house) is the same with *συν παντι οικω* with all the house. This is clear from its undeniable sense in other passages where it occurs.

After such bold attacks as these upon the word of God, to make way for this human invention, we need not wonder at any thing, however ridiculous and absurd, that may be advanced upon the subject. Our author's dreams and conjectures are almost innocent when compared with these; for though it is very unbecoming to give way to groundless conjectures, when the question is about what saith the Lord, yet it is not near so shocking, as flatly to contradict the plain and express testimony of the word of God. But I have enlarged too much upon this head, and shall now proceed to

## PART II.

“Christ's commission to his apostles, ‘Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,’ is to be understood according to the prophecies that went

The Seventy use this word in Exod. i. 1. “Now these are the names of the children of Israel which came into Egypt, (εχαστος πατριρχι, i. e.) each man with his whole house.” Or, shall we say, according to this criticism, that only the eleven patriarchs came into Egypt; that this journey was theirs, and that their families were left behind them? The only other place where I have met with this word is in Josephus, Antiq. B. IV. chap. iv. Sec. 4. where, speaking of the law respecting the offerings allotted for the priests maintenance, he says, it was appointed “that they, (πατριρχι) with their whole families, might eat them in the holy city.” Should any one still imagine that these offerings pertained only to the priest himself; that this eating was his, and that none of his family partook with him, I refer him to the law itself of which Josephus is speaking, “In the most holy place shalt thou eat it—I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons, and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it,” Num. xviii. 10—20. Thus it is clear beyond all dispute, That our translators have given the true meaning of this word, and that when a man does any thing πατριρχι, he does it in concert with a whole house, who are equally engaged therein with himself.

before concerning the calling of the Gentiles, and the children who should make up the Messiah's kingdom as it appears in this world."

That the commission, Matth. xxviii. 18, 19. was every way agreeable to the prophecies respecting the calling of the Gentiles, and the children that should make up the Messiah's kingdom, is freely granted; and I refer you back to the view I have given of these children, and the sense in which they are so called. But when he says, "the commission must be understood, *according to the prophecies*," I am much mistaken if he does not mean, that we must explain the commission by these prophecies, or take the prophecies as a key to our Lord's words, which I absolutely deny. We could no more understand the plainest of these prophecies, than the eunuch did, were it not for the public interpretation of the inspired apostles. The calling of the Gentiles appears to us now to be plainly prophesied of, because we have the New Testament key; but the apostle always speaks of that event as a mystery hid from ages and generations, and which in other ages was not known, Eph. iii. 5, 6. Col. i. 26. and so we see how ignorant the first Jewish converts, and even the apostles themselves, had been about that matter, Acts x. 28. 34, 35, 45. chap. xi. 2, 3, 17, 18. We are not aware how much we are beholden to the New Testament explication of the prophecies, and are ready to wonder at the stupidity of the Jews; but it is more wonderful to see men, who acknowledge the New Testament to be the accomplishment and explication of the Old, still overlooking that explication, and advancing their own fancies upon the prophecies in its stead; and, what exceeds all, making



the Old Testament a key to the New. It is by this method that national churches and covenants have been founded on scripture. The Seceders can find even their party, with the bond for renewing the covenant, prophesied of in Isa. xix. 18.\* and they can tell us, with as good a grace as our author, that 2 Cor. viii. 5. is to be understood according to such prophecies.

The prophecies in general do not admit of a strict and literal interpretation, when applying them to the affairs of Christ's kingdom, as they are clothed in language borrowed from the types; for this would lead us into the very error of the Jews, and judaizing professors who minded earthly things, among which was their being of the stock of Israel. Hence the necessity of attending diligently, and adhering strictly to the apostolic explication of the prophecies, as well as types of the Old Testament. We cannot therefore go at first hand to the prophecies, in order to explain the New Testament by them; on the contrary, we must enter them with the New Testament key, by which they are opened to us in express quotations, doctrine, or the history of facts; for the inspired and able ministers of the New Testament teach without a veil, and use great plainness of speech, 2 Cor. iii. 12, 13. This being the case, I lay down the reverse of our author's position and maintain,

That the prophecies which went before concerning the calling of the Gentiles, and the children who should make up the Messiah's kingdom, must be understood according to, or explained by, our Lord's commission to his apostles in connection with the subsequent revelation.

\* See Mr. Moncrieff's Sermons on the Duty of National Covenanting.



The best commentary upon our Lord's commission to his apostles, is their practice in executing it, of which we have an account in the history of the Acts. Facts are always the plainest and most convincing arguments.

1. Jesus commands them to "Go, and *teach* all nations;" or as Mark hath it, "Go ye into all the world, and *preach the gospel* to every creature," chap. xvi. 15. Accordingly we find them going about every where teaching or preaching the gospel, first to the Jews, and afterwards to the Gentiles of all nations; and it was by this teaching alone that they made disciples.

2. He commands them to *baptize them*, viz. those whom they should previously teach, or make disciples by teaching; for Mark hath it, "He that *believeth*, and is baptized." Let us now see if they always observed this order, viz. of baptizing only those whom they had first taught or made disciples. Peter first preaches the gospel to the Jews, "then they that *gladly received his word* were baptized," Acts ii. 41.—Philip, in the first place, preaches the gospel to the Samaritans, and then "when they *believed* Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus, they were baptized both men and women," chap. viii. 12.—The same Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch, but it was not till he *professed the faith*, that he baptized him, ver. 35, 37, 38—Peter first taught Cornelius, his house and friends, and it was not till the *Holy Ghost fell upon them*, and they *magnified God*, that they were baptized, chap. x. 44—48.—Paul and Silas first spake the word of the Lord to the Jailer, and to all that were in his house, and when they *believed it*, they were baptized, chap. xvi. 32, 33, 34.—In like manner, "many of the Corinthians hearing, *believed*,

and" then it follows, they "were baptized," Acts xviii. 8. These instances demonstrate, that the apostles adhered strictly to the order of the commission; and I make bold to challenge all the Poedobaptists in the world to produce one single instance wherein they deviated from this order, or baptized any till they were previously made disciples by teaching.

3. They are commanded to *teach* the baptized disciples, *τηρειν*, to *observe* (keep or obey) *all things* whatsoever he had commanded them. This last teaching is not only expressed by a different word in the original, but differs in various other respects from the first, and so is not a tautology. The first has for its *object* all nations; the last only the baptized disciples gathered out of the nations.—The *design* of the former is to make disciples, or beget unbelievers to the faith; that of the latter is to instruct believers how they ought to walk and please God.—The *subject matter* of the first is the gospel; that of the latter, Christ's laws and ordinances.

That the apostles always timed this last teaching according to the order stated in the commission, is also plain from the whole of their practice. As they never baptized any but such as were first made disciples by preaching the gospel to them; so neither did they ever teach men to obey the laws of Christ till they were baptized disciples. They never supposed that any one could obey the gospel, till once their minds were principled by the truth; nor did they make any account of that obedience which does not spring from love, a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. Wherever we find them inculcating the observance of *all things* whatsoever Christ hath commanded, they address themselves only to disciples,

and draw the reasons and motives of their exhortations from the principles of the gospel, which such are supposed already to believe. To evince this, I might cite all the commandments and exhortations in the New Testament. \*

Thus it is clear, that the apostles executed the commission in all its parts, and in the very order in which it was delivered to them; and it would have been preposterous, as well as direct disobedience in them, to have done otherwise; for indeed, that order is founded as well in the nature of things, as in positive institution; and cannot be deranged or inverted, without throwing the whole into confusion and absurdity. We have no occasion therefore to go to the prophecies

\* As the Lord's Supper is among the *all things* which the baptized disciples must be taught to observe, it is plain, that none are proper subjects of baptism, but such as may immediately after receive the Lord's Supper. Mr. Huddleston says, "This objection takes its rise from this notion; That none are *capable of being members of the body of Christ*, but those who are capable of being members of those churches which are formed to shew forth this body." *Lett. p. 77.*—*Ans.* Not so, but it takes its rise from this notion, That none are *capable of baptism* but such as are also capable of being *the same day* added to a visible church, and so of continuing in the apostles doctrine, and in fellowship, and in *breaking of bread*, and in prayers, Acts ii. 41, 42. Baptism is the sign of the new birth, and the Lord's Supper of feeding upon Christ the true bread; and so the connection between these two ordinances, and the things signified by them, is as immediate and necessary, as that between a person's *having life* and his *taking food* to preserve it. If therefore, persons appear to be born of the Spirit, and have the sign thereof in baptism, how come they to be denied the sign of their spiritual nourishment in the Supper. What can this represent but children in a starving condition? It is admitted, that baptism belongs to none but such as are visible subjects of the kingdom of God; and I lay it down as an axiom, which I am confident none can overthrow, *viz.* That the Lord's Supper belongs to all the visible subjects of the kingdom of God *immediately* upon their being baptized.



for explaining the commission. This would be to use the light of a candle to let us see the meridian sun. It is sufficiently plain of itself; and if any possibility of doubt should remain, the apostolic practice entirely removes it.

Further, the prophecies concerning the children who should make up the Messiah's kingdom, as it appears in this world, must be understood according to this commission, and the subsequent revelation given to the apostles for executing it. But this commission respects no *visible* children but such as are capable of being *taught*, or made disciples by teaching; and to this agree the prophecies respecting them, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children," Isa. liv. 13. which our Lord explains thus, "every one that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me," John vi. 45. for they are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 26. The apostles acknowledged none as visible children of God, but such as professed this faith. Such also are the children who are to be baptized according to the commission; for it does not say, Baptize little children first, and teach or disciple them afterwards; but on the contrary, it runs, "Teach all nations, baptizing them—He that *believeth*, and is baptized;" and with this the whole of the apostolic practice, as also their doctrine about baptism corresponds; "For (says the apostle) we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of us as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ," Gal. iii. 26, 27.

Enough, I am persuaded, has been said to convince any simple and candid person, that the commission has no respect to the baptism of infants, and that such



a practice is every way incompatible with it, as well as with the prophecies which relate to it. But I must take notice of some of our author's fancies on this head.

He gives us two views of the commission—1. As it respects *teaching*—2. As it respects *teaching and baptizing*. A most curious distinction indeed! As if the apostles were to *teach* some whom they were not to *teach and baptize*, and *teach and baptize* others whom they were not to *teach*. His intention, however, is to show, that the commission warrants the baptism of those who are not taught. Upon the first part of this imaginary distinction, he says,

1. " This commission, as it respects *teaching* or *preaching*, is to be understood according to the prophecies that went before concerning the calling of the Gentiles." This he grounds on Acts xii. 44—47. where the apostle cites Isa. xlix. 6. to shew the Jews, who did not regard the commission or the authority of Jesus, that he was warranted from their own scriptures to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. But were we to understand the commission only according to this prophecy, then the apostles would have had no commission to teach the Jews; for this prophecy, as quoted by the apostle, speaks only of the Gentiles; whereas they were commissioned to teach *all nations*, both Jews and Gentiles; to preach repentance and remission of sins, in Christ's name, among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*, Luke xxiv. 47. To some of them was committed the gospel of the *circumcision*, as unto Peter; to others the gospel of the *uncircumcision*, as unto Paul, Gal. ii. 7. and accordingly they preached the gospel, *to the Jews first, and also to the Gentiles*, Rom. i. 16. This then, is a wrong view of the com-

mission, because partial. After all, what concern has it with infant sprinkling? I suppose we must gather this from his second view, *viz.*

2. " This commission, as it respects *teaching and baptizing*, must be understood according to the prophecies concerning the calling of the Gentiles, and the children who should make up the Messiah's kingdom, as it appears in this world." For this he cites Acts ii. containing Peter's discourses to the Jews. But how does Peter's teaching the Jews shew he was commissioned only to teach the Gentiles? Or how does it shew, that *teaching and baptizing* respects infants? To discover this we must have recourse, after all, to the author's paraphrase, giving such a sense of ver. 38, 39. as he owns the apostle himself did not understand or intend; and no wonder, for indeed it is a very strange one.—" Change your views of the Messiah's kingdom—for the promise of a standing in his kingdom, as it appears in this world, is unto you, and to your children, and to them that are afar off, belonging to any nation in the same way that it is unto you; that is, to them and to their children: in this way it is unto those whom the Lord our God shall call out of every nation; for the Gentiles are to have the same privileges with the Jews in the kingdom of Jesus."

The *repentance* which our author here calls the Jews to, is such as they did not need: it required no change in their views of the Messiah's kingdom to believe, that they, as the children of Abraham, and their carnal seed, should have a standing in it, for this was the view they all along had of it; but when John the Baptist preaches the kingdom of the Messiah, he calls them to repent of such views, " Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father;"

(Luke iii. 8.) or in other words, We have a believer to our father; for this can procure you no standing in the Messiah's kingdom. Agreeably to this the apostle says, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh;" i. e. We esteem no man a subject of Christ's kingdom by his carnal descent from Abraham, or by any thing that constituted him a member of, and entitled him to, the privileges of the Jewish church—"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is (or, let him be) a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 16, 17.

Again, the *promise* which he makes them of a *visible standing* (as he calls it) is very different from that which Peter here mentions, which is the promise of the *Holy Ghost* spoken of by the prophet Joel; see ver. 16—22.

Further, the *children* here mentioned are supposed, by our author, to be *infant children*, for such only can answer his purpose; but the apostle is here speaking of the same children that are spoken of in Joel, *viz.* their sons and their daughters who should receive the Spirit and prophecy. Mr. Huddleston observes on this passage, that "Peter says, the promise is unto *you*, i. e. all gladly receiving the word.—From these *you* he distinguishes *their children*, and connects them in the promise; and their children sure must be all the children that could not be included in the preceding *you*, so all their little children." \* But he might also have told us, that the Jews had infant children who cast out devils; for our Lord asks them, "By whom do *your children* cast them out?" Matth. xii. 27. Here the children are distinguished from those whom our Lord addresses, and cannot be included in the pre-

\* Letters, p. 20.



ceding *your*, and so, according to this author's logic, must be "all their little children." Mr. Sandeman, however, seems to have had a very just view of the children here spoken of, where he says, "The promise is *only* to as many as the Lord our God shall call; and *none* can appear to us to be the called of God, but such as appear to *believe* the gospel which Peter preached, and to *comply* with his exhortation to repentance." \*—

*Lastly*, he makes Peter tell the Jews, that "the Gentiles were to have the same privileges with them in the kingdom of Jesus:"—Whereas this was more than he probably knew himself, till it was afterwards revealed to him; nor was it to his purpose in calling the Jews to repentance, who were not yet able to bear that truth. In short, the author has so framed his paraphrase, as to lead one to think, that Peter was addressing Baptists instead of Jews, and that he was calling them to repent and baptize their infants! and yet, after all, we find none baptized there, but *they that gladly received his word*, and were that same day added to the church, ver. 41.

Permit me now, in my turn, to paraphrase these two verses. The promise of the Holy Ghost, spoken of in Joel, is unto you, Jews, and to your children, even your sons and daughters who shall prophesy, ver. 17. and it is not only to you who dwell at Jerusalem, but also to those of you who are afar off from thence dispersed among the nations; yet not to all the Jewish nation, but to the remnant according to the election of grace, (Rom. ix. 27. chap. xi. 5.) which in the prophecy are styled "the remnant whom the Lord shall call," Joel ii. 3. so this promise is even to as many of

\* Appendix to Letters on Theron and Aspasio, Vol. ii. p. 333.



you, and your children, both here and elsewhere, as the Lord our God shall call, and to none else of you; for he giveth the Holy Ghost only to such as obey him, chap. v. 32. Repent therefore, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, according to God's promise.

He owns, we "say just things concerning the two covenants, *viz.* the law or Sinai covenant, and the new or better covenant; and the two seeds, *viz.* the natural seed of Abraham, and the spiritual seed of Christ, who are also called the seed of Abraham, as being connected with Him who is of the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, the great promised Seed."—Had the author considered properly what he is here saying, he might have seen, that by this concession he hath entirely given up the point, and cut himself out from every ground to stand upon; it being impossible for him to hold these distinctions consistently with the principles he lays down for infant-baptism; for he gives the very same place to the fleshly birth in the kingdom of Christ under the new covenant, that it formerly had in the earthly kingdom under the old covenant. He makes it as good an evidence of their being Christians, as it was formerly of their being Jews: nay, he makes it of greater avail now, than under the old covenant; for then it could not distinguish the spiritual seed of Abraham; but now, (according to his doctrine,) it points out those whom we are to reckon the true holy seed, and heirs of spiritual, everlasting, and heavenly privileges.

Mr. Huddleston asserts, "That the fleshly seed of New Testament believers are really the spiritual seed

of Abraham;” \* but he denies, that they are distinguished by the fleshly birth, and says, “Believers’ infants are distinguished by that same thing which distinguishes themselves to be the spiritual Israel, *viz.* the confession of the mouth to salvation.” † Do infants then confess the faith with the mouth? No.—How then are they distinguished? By the confession of another.—Very well; and does this confession respect all infants? No.—How then do we distinguish the infants whom this confession respects, from other infants? By their being the infants of the professor, or springing from him by *natural generation*. Thus we see it lands in the *natural birth* at last; and if this be not confounding the apostolic distinction of the covenants and seeds, I know not what is.

But then our author says, we “confound the distinction that is betwixt the *spiritually holy nation*; which consists of the saved out of all nations, with the *kingdom of God as it appears in this world*: and in this way deceive the hearts of those who believe without proper evidence, and blind the minds of them who receive not the simple sayings of the Son of God;” and for this distinction he cites Matth. xiii. 47—50. which speaks of the *good* and *bad* fishes; to this he might have added, Matth. xxv. 1—14. which speaks of the *wise* and *foolish* virgins.

As the author’s whole scheme of reasoning rests entirely upon an *improper use* of this distinction, which is to be met with almost in every page of his book, I shall consider it particularly.

1. We maintain, that the true kingdom of God consists of the whole body of the elect, whether Jews or

\* Letters, p. 73.

† Page 74.

Gentiles, infants or adults, who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and who shall all be certainly and finally saved. This is that society which the scripture calls the *general assembly* and church of the first-born, which are enrolled in heaven, Heb. xii. 23. the *whole family* in heaven and in earth, Eph. iii. 15. the *one body*, having the one spirit, and of which Christ is the head, chap. iv. 4. chap. v. 23. and which is commonly called his *invisible kingdom* or *church*. Into this kingdom no hypocrite or unclean thing can enter, Rev. xxi. 27.

2. We maintain, that this kingdom *appears in this world unto men*, in the open profession of the faith of Jesus with its correspondent fruits, and in no other way; but as men do not always speak as they think, and as good actions may often proceed from bad principles and motives; and further, as we neither can nor are allowed to judge the hearts of men, hence hypocrites and unbelievers may enter into the *appearance* of this kingdom in the world; and so our Lord represents it in this view, as consisting of wise and foolish virgins, good and bad fishes, &c. To this view of the kingdom belong the churches of the saints, each of whom are a *visible representation* of that one body which is invisible. But to the point:

3. Those whom the scripture points out unto us as belonging to Christ's kingdom, as it appears in this world, must also be looked upon as belonging to the holy nation of them that are saved. We are obliged by the word of God to esteem none brethren, but such as profess the faith, and walk accordingly. We are also bound by that same word, to esteem every one who professes the faith of Christ, and appears under its influence, to be not only in *appearance*, but in



*truth* and *reality* the elect of God, and to love them as brethren for whom Christ died. We are not allowed here to make any distinction between those who belong to the appearance of Christ's kingdom in this world, and those who belong to the spiritually holy nation of them that are saved.

(1.) Because we cannot do it. This distinction is known only to God. He alone knows whom he hath chosen, and who are his; he also searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the children of men, and can discover the most hidden hypocrisy under the disguise of the fairest appearances; and it is he alone that will at last make a final separation of the sheep from the goats, and gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends. But for us, we can make no such discrimination. Many may obtain salvation whom we cannot esteem saints; and some, whom we must look upon as such, may finally fall short of it.

(2.) Because it is contrary to the fervent charity enjoined in the gospel, for us to attempt to distinguish between the *visible* and *real* subjects of Christ's kingdom. Charity rejoiceth in the truth, and respects our brethren as *real* believers, not as *nominal* ones only. We love them in the truth, as knowing the truth, and for the truth's sake dwelling in them, 2 John, ver. 1, 2.—as brethren for whom Christ died, Rom. xiv. 15.—as members of that one body whereof Christ is the head, and for which he gave himself an offering and a sacrifice to God, Eph. iv. 4, 15, 16. chap. v. 2. It is only in this view we can love them with a pure heart fervently. Every thought of them that falls short of this view, without visible evidence, is that evil-judging which is opposed to charity, and an assuming Christ's prerogative, Rom. xiv. 4, 10. James iv. 12.



(3.) The inspired apostles, though they had the gift of discerning spirits, in respect of doctrine, yet they never distinguish those who belong to the appearance of Christ's kingdom in this world, from such as belong to the holy nation of the saved, but speak of them always as one and the same, or, (to use our author's phrase,) *confound* them. They address all to whom they write as elect, saints, redeemed, and saved. Paul says, that the vessels of mercy which God had afore prepared unto glory, are, "Even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles," Rom. ix. 23; 24—he includes the professing Ephesians with himself, as redeemed and adopted, according as they were predestinated and chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, Eph. i. 4—8.—he tells the Thessalonians, that he knew their election, 1 Thess. i. 4.—and declares that the Hebrews were come unto the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, Heb. xii. 22, 23.—Peter writing to the strangers scattered abroad, addresses them as "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 2. and calls them "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," chap. ii. 9. Yet notwithstanding all this, we learn from these same writings, that hypocrites and false professors had crept in even among them. Shall we therefore infer, that the apostles deceive the hearts and blind the minds of men, because they do not distinguish between the *apparent* and *real* subjects of Christ, or, in other words, because they were not omniscient? We indeed know, that there is a distinction between the appearance and reality of true religion;

but the practical use of this is, not to *judge our brother*, but to judge and *examine ourselves*, 1 Cor. xi. 28, 31. Gal. vi. 3, 4.

It is evident then, that this distinction which our author harps so much upon, has nothing to do with the controversy about baptism; for as baptism belongs only to Christ's *visible* subjects, so all who have this *appearance* must be esteemed by us his *real* subjects, and as belonging to the spiritually holy nation of them that are saved; for this plain reason, because it is the *appearance* of that *very thing*.

What an unworthy view must our author have of the subjects of baptism, and even of his own brethren, when he distinguishes them from the spiritually holy nation of the saved, and cannot look upon them as belonging to it! What can be the foundation of his charity to them? Do the scriptures ever enjoin us to love a mere appearance, without supposing its invisible reality? But our author, that he may avoid confounding matters, takes special care, all along, to let us know, that he does not mean the reality, but only the appearance of things; and so he is contending for a mere shadow, a thing of nought.

He comes next to what is commonly called the *mode* or *manner* of baptism; but I shall defer the consideration of that, till I have discussed his arguments about the *subjects*, and proceed at present to

### PART III.

“The household of Lydia were baptized when she made profession of the faith of Jesus,” Acts xvi. 13, 14, 15.

His meaning is, that her household were baptized upon her single profession of the faith, without being

either taught, or making a profession themselves; and his reason for this supposition is, that it is not particularly mentioned. But by the same rule of interpretation, we may deny that she professed the faith herself before baptism; for neither is that particularly mentioned in so many words. Rom. x. 10. however, is to him a sufficient proof, that she must have confessed the faith with her mouth; and if so, he cannot in justice blame us, though we should refer him to the commission as a proof that her household were *taught* and *believed*, before they were baptized; especially, when this is corroborated and explained by the whole practice of the apostles, and the instances of all the other households which they baptized. He cannot but allow, that it is a good and safe rule to make the scripture its own interpreter, or to explain the more concise and obscure passages by such other passages relating to the subject as are more full and explicit; and if he admits of this rule in every other case, he ought certainly to shew cause why it cannot be admitted here.

I appeal to himself, if he has not purposely singled out this account of Lydia's household in distinction from all the rest, as affording him, from its silence, the greatest scope for conjecture. Surely that must be a bad cause which obliges men to shun the light, and avail themselves of obscurity, and so oppose what the scripture *says not*, to what it positively and repeatedly declares. Taking advantage then of the silence of this passage, he conjectures, that Lydia's household was all made up of little children; and then she must have been an extraordinary woman indeed, to have managed her public business of selling purple, together with a family of helpless infants, for it does not appear



she had a husband at that time. If it be supposed she had servants to assist her, then, for any thing we know, these may have been her *household*, according to the frequent use of that word in scripture; see Gen. xvii. 27. 1 Kings i. 9, 11. 2 Kings vii. 9, 11.

But our author imagines they were infants, because when she invites Paul and his companions to her house, she uses this argument, "If ye have judged *me* faithful;" whereas had they been adults, she must have said, If ye have judged *us* faithful, else she must have had "a high sense of her own importance, and a great penury of brotherly love." But perhaps she knew, that she had the *only* right, both by the law of God and man, to invite them to her *own* house, and that in her *own* name too, as she was the mistress and head of it, as well as proprietor of all the entertainment therein; and perhaps she did this in the kind simplicity of her heart, without imagining what bad construction would be put upon this act of love 1724 years afterwards. Supposing her thoroughly instructed in the Christian law of "esteeming others better than ourselves, and in honour preferring one another," Rom. xii. 10. Philip. ii. 3. (for which she had as yet very little time,) yet it could never enter into her head, that that law set aside her civil superiority of mistress over her servants, or her natural superiority of a parent, even over her adult children; see Eph. vi. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8. Nor could she ever learn, from any exhortation in all the New Testament, (supposing it then written, that she was now deprived of the sole right of disposing of her own; of using hospitality to saints and strangers; and of pressing their acceptance of her kindness, as an evidence that they judged her faithful to the Lord therein; see 3 John, ver. 5.



The author does "not chuse to say what must be ascribed to Paul and his companions, who were constrained by this argument:" for it seems had they complied with her invitation as a testimony that they esteemed her faithful, it would have been such an atrocious sin in them, as is not fit to be mentioned. But he ought to remember, that the apostles were not so evil-minded as he would have been in this case. They were not so ungratefully disposed, as to snap at the hand that offered them a kindness, nor so captious as to carp at expressions dictated by a heart overflowing with love.

He says, "We may learn from Jesus's words, that her little children are here called her household; for, pointing at the little children who were brought to him in the days of his flesh, he said, *Of such is the kingdom of God.*" There are some assertions difficult to answer from their extreme absurdity; and I am mistaken if this is not one of them. Our Lord does not here mention any person's household whatever, far less the household of Lydia in particular; neither is he defining the word *household*, or restricting its sense to little children, contrary to its usual acceptation throughout the whole scripture. His words are not, *Of such only are the households of believers*; but, "*Of such is the kingdom of God.*" How then can we learn from these words that Lydia had little children, who are here called her household, and that in distinction from her adult children and domestics? Noah's house consisted of his wife, sons, and daughters in-law, and there were no infants there, Gen. vii. 7. Abraham had a numerous household of servants, whilst as yet he had no child of his own, Gen. xiv. 14. chap. xv. 2, 3. Our Lord says, "*A man's foes shall be they*

of his own household," Matth. x. 36. Does the word *household* here mean little children ?

The word *house* or *household* in scripture signifies sometimes a man's kindred, lineage, and even distant posterity, Luke i. 27. chap. ii. 4. sometimes a whole people or tribe, Psal. cxv. 12. and sometimes a man's particular family, including his wife, adult and infant children, as well as domestic servants, as has been shown ; but in no part of the word of God does it signify little children in distinction from adults, this being only a conceit of some modern Pœdobaptists, invented to support their cause with the ignorant ; but which must prejudice it with those who search the scriptures for themselves.

The passage itself, however, affords evidence that Lydia's household were adults ; for we are told, ver. 40. that Paul and Silas " went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed." Now, infants cannot be supposed capable of being comforted ; and whether it is most reasonable to think that they comforted these young converts of Lydia's household, whom they were now leaving behind them exposed to the hatred of their infidel neighbours, or those hardy veterans Timothy and Luke, their fellow travellers and labourers who departed along with themselves, let the reader judge. This same Timothy was sent back to comfort and strengthen the Thessalonians, a little while afterwards, 1 Thess. iii. 1—8.

Our author farther affirms, that " the baptism of the household of Lydia, when she professed the faith, was agreeable to the doctrine which Paul taught ; for he said to believers in Jesus, " The unbelieving husband is sanctified to the wife, and the unbelieving wife is

sanctified *to* the husband; else were your children unclean," or common, but now are they holy, or set apart unto God, 1 Cor. vii. 14. But what has this text to do with baptism? The apostle is not here speaking a word upon that subject, but answering the scruples of Christians about continuing in their marriage relation with infidels.

The author makes the apostle to say, that the children are holy as "set apart unto God;" whereas he is speaking of a holiness which is the result of the unbelieving party's being sanctified or made holy; for, says the apostle, "the unbelieving party is sanctified, else were your children unclean." The apostle denies that the children would be holy, unless the unbelieving parent were so also; and it is certain, that no other holiness can result from, or be thus connected with, the holiness of an unbeliever, but what is of the same nature with itself.

Mr. Huddleston, after having told us, that the unbelieving wife is sanctified to the husband as his food is, gives us his view of the holiness of the children, thus, "But now are they holy," viz. "as the Corinthians themselves were holy, being washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God."\* Let us try then how the text will read according to this gloss; "The unbelieving wife is sanctified to the husband as his food is; else were your children neither washed, sanctified, nor justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, nor by the Spirit of God!!!" The very stating of this, manifests its absurdity at once.

The same author proposes what he calls a rea-

\* Letters, p. 72.



sonable request, viz. " Let any text in the Bible, between the beginning and the end, be produced where a person is said to be *holy*, where a special relation to God, or being devoted and separated to him, is not intended." \*—But without entering into such an extensive search, I produce this very text under consideration, " The unbelieving husband is sanctified (*ἁγιασται*, *made holy*,) by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified (*made holy*) by the husband;" to which let me add his own sense of these words, that " the unbeliever is sanctified to the believer as his food is," † and this gives a full answer to his request, until he inform us what *special relation* to God unbelievers have by this holiness, and how they are *devoted* or *separated* to him by it.

He says, " We have generally explained the sanctification here to intend marriage—but is it possible we can be serious in supposing the apostle would tell these Corinthians who had unbelieving wives, that they were married to them? or, did the Corinthians need to be told this?" ‡ No; but though they did not need to be told they were *married*, yet they needed to be told their marriage was *lawful*, else what was the ground of their scruple at all? He is not telling them they were married, but that their marriage was *lawful* or *holy*, by shewing them that the unbelieving party was *sanctified* (*εἰς*) in that relation to the believer, and so not to be put away.

He also misrepresents our view of the uncleanness and holiness of the children. " We have (says he) explained the uncleanness of the children to be *bastardy*, and the holiness *legitimacy*;" § and he thinks the Co-

\* Letters, p. 30.

† Ibid, p. 30.

‡ Ibid, p. 30.

§ Ibid.



rinthians had no occasion to be told, their children were not bastards; for as they were the children of marriage, they must have known them to be legitimate. But by bastards in this case we do not mean those begotten betwixt persons single, or unmarried, but the issue of *unlawful* marriages, like those which sprang from an Israelite's marriage with a heathen. This is the uncleanness which the apostle is speaking of; and as he makes this *uncleanness* of the children, to come from the supposed *unlawfulness* of the parents marriage, so does he make their *holiness* to be the effect of the *lawfulness* or sanctity of that marriage; and what kind of holiness can this be but legitimacy, or their being begotten according to the law of God, which is the standard of all holiness?

That the holiness of the children here is of the same kind with that of the unbelieving parent, will be further evident, if we consider,

1. That the apostle infers the one from the other: "The unbelieving wife is sanctified;—else were your children unclean; but now are they holy:" Now it does not follow from the parents having one kind of holiness, that therefore the children must have another and higher kind; but it follows clearly, that if the wife or husband is lawful, the children must be so also.

2. The apostle absolutely denies that the children would have this holiness, unless the unbelieving parent (*hγιασαι*) *hath been sanctified*, or previously made holy: "The unbelieving wife hath been sanctified;—else were your children unclean." Now, if the holiness of the children be the effect of their being washed, justified, and sanctified, it could never depend upon, or stand and fall with that inferior kind of holiness ascribed to the unbelieving parent; for this would be to

make the very salvation of children depend upon the lawfulness of their parents marriage ; but if we understand the holiness to be legitimacy, it is plain that this depends entirely on their parents having been lawfully married.

3. When the apostle says, “ Else were your children unclean,” he shews what would have been the case, had the law of Moses been in force with respect to their unbelieving wives ; but that law made the children unclean in no other sense than it made the unbelieving parent ; therefore the holiness which he opposes to that uncleanness, and ascribes to each, must be the same in both.

4. No other holiness than legitimacy could suit the apostle’s argument against putting away their unbelieving wives ; for the children even of an incestuous marriage may have the holiness of the truth, while yet the marriage itself ought to be dissolved ; but if the children are lawfully begotten, then the marriage must have been lawful also, and therefore must stand.

Upon the whole, it is demonstrably clear, that the meaning of the passage is neither more nor less than this, “ Ye must not put away your unbelieving wives, if they are willing to dwell with you, (as Israel were obliged to do by the law of separation from the heathen, Deut. vii. 3.) else ye must put away your children also ; for that law classed them with the unclean party, and enjoined them to be put away, Ezra x. 3. but now, under the gospel, both the unbelieving party, and the children begot with them, are holy or lawful, even as the meats are, which were formerly forbidden by the law of Moses, (1 Tim. iv. 5.) that law being set aside which made them unlawful or unclean.” Now what has this passage to do with infant sprinkling ?

Our author asserts, that "the children of believing parents are represented in scripture as *some way* connected with their parents in the profession made by them;" and for proof of this cites, 2 Tim. ii. 16. "The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus; for *he* oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain." So it seems Paul could not pray for the house of Onesiphorus, unless they had been connected with their parent in his profession!!! Does this deserve an answer? The household of Onesiphorus were not infants, but had made the profession themselves, as is evident from his charging Timothy in this very epistle to salute them, chap. iv. 19.

The author says, children are *some way* connected with their parents; but does not tell us *what way*. I will venture to do it for him. The *peculiar* connection between a parent and his child is entirely natural and carnal. If they are Christ's, they are in that respect both equally *children*; and in relation to one another, in this connection, they are not *parent* and *child*, but *brethren*; in which respect they are as much related to all the household of God as to one another. This connection has nothing to do with the fleshly relation, but is supernatural; nor is it *peculiar* to parent and child, but is founded on that *common* union by which every member of Christ's body is connected with him as the Head.

He concludes this part, by observing, "That in the baptism of little children we have a lively representation of this great truth, As sin and death came from the first Adam to all his natural seed, and even to little children, without any act or deed of theirs; so righteousness and life come from the second Adam to all his spiritual seed, and even to little children in



the same way."—This seems to imply, that this great truth is not so properly represented in the baptism of believers, because they are supposed to perform some *act* or *deed* of their own to obtain righteousness and life.\*

If there is any thing in this representation peculiar to infants, it must lie in this, that as by the obedience of one many are made righteous; so (according to our author) by the profession of one man all his infants appear righteous. Thus the parent and his profession for his household, is a lively representation of Christ and his vicarious obedience for the whole household of faith!!! But then the other part of the representation is not quite so lively; for whereas by the disobedience of one many are made sinners, and so in their first birth are *shapen in iniquity* and *conceived in sin*, the author teaches us, that children are born *holy* by virtue of their connection with believing parents, and this may be constructed by *weak minds* as contradicting the doctrine of original sin; for every one will not be able to understand how righteousness and life should be transmitted to us in the same channel with sin and death.

Mr. Huddleston affirms, "That men have their little children connected with them in the great salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ, even as they are in the condemnation by Adam."† But this contradicts a number of scripture facts: Adam had a Cain in his family, Noah a Ham, Abraham an Ishmael, and Isaac an Esau; none of which children the scripture directs us to look upon as connected with their parents in salvation,

\* The Papists have invented many lively representations, which they think more significant than those which God hath enjoined.

† Letters, p. 23.



and yet all these were infants before they became adults. But he has a salvo for this, viz. that the connection in salvation continues only during their infancy, but vanishes in their adult state. This hereditary salvation, fleeting as it is, he makes peculiar to the New Testament: "The promise (says he) which is to believers and their children, belongs to the covenant made after these days; and it was never said to Abraham, thou shalt be saved, and thy house."\* Now if we compare this with his affirming, that this promise is the very testimony of the gospel,† it must follow, that the gospel was not preached before unto Abraham; nor could his faith "answer to that which is now preached," or be set before us in the New Testament as the example of our faith, as in Rom. iv. 12, 23, 24. Gal. iii. 6—9. Neither can we, according to this author, perceive Abraham to have been of the kingdom of God; for (says he,) "We perceive an adult person to be of the kingdom of God, by his confessing the truth to his own salvation, and *the salvation of his house*."‡ Lastly, according to this, we have no ground to believe there were any elect infants, under the Old Testament; for he denies that we have any other foundation whereon to rest our opinion that there are elect infants, but their connection with their believing parent; § yet Abraham, it seems, had not even this evidence. However, when we consider all that has been advanced upon this salvation, Abraham would sustain very little loss, it being a matter not worth the contending for.

\* Letters, p. 63. † Ibid, p. 75.

‡ Ibid, p. 39. § Ibid, p. 37.

## PART IV.

“Baptism is the figure corresponding unto the preservation, and visible salvation of Noah, and seven more in connection with him, in the ark, by water. — ‘Wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.

Here our author runs the parallel between baptism and the temporal deliverance of Noah and his family from the flood, thus;—“It agrees thereto as water is used in baptism.”—This we grant; for the apostle says, that eight souls were saved (*δι' ὕδατος*), *through*, *by*, or rather *in* water, as the same original phrase is rendered, 2 Pet. iii. 5. So baptism represents not only our death and burial with Christ, but also our resurrection with him and deliverance from death, Rom. vi. 4. Col. ii. 12.

He says, “It agrees thereto, as baptism is a sign of the salvation that is by Christ.” The salvation of Noah and his house, by the ark in water, was indeed a type of the salvation that is by Christ; for the apostle calls baptism, and the salvation signified by it, its (*αντιτυπος*) *antitype*. But it ought to be noticed, that there is still such a difference between them, as is between Old Testament types and New Testament ordinances. The redemption of old Israel from Egypt, when they passed under the cloud, and through the sea, was also a type of baptism and the salvation signified by it; but that typical baptism was not into

Christ, but unto Moses ; and the salvation by that baptism was not the salvation by Christ, but the temporal deliverance of an earthly nation from Egyptian slavery. Even so the salvation of these eight souls in water was in itself only a temporal salvation from the deluge, and the preservation of a race of men, as well as of every other animal, for replenishing the earth. But the New Testament baptism has no temporal, typical, nor even *visible* salvation (as our author affirms) connected with it, but is the immediate sign of the spiritual and invisible salvation by Christ. It does not save from the flood, nor from Egyptian bondage, nor by putting away the filth of the flesh, like the legal bathings ; but by the death and resurrection of Christ ; and in this respect it essentially differs from these earthly deliverances, being their *antitype*, as the apostle declares.

All this, however, is nothing to the point, and therefore he adds, " It agrees thereto as the *little children* of believers are baptized, and so visibly saved on account of their connection with their parents." This is a strange assertion indeed ! and is so far from having any foundation in the text, that it is every way contrary to it. The passage informs us, that there were but *eight souls* saved in the ark, and our author (as in the case of Lydia's household) supposes they were little children ; but the scripture expressly tells us, that these *eight souls* were Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives, see Gen. vi. 18. chap. vii. 7. chap. viii. 16. Surely these married sons were not little children, neither were their wives little children, nor Noah's proper children at all. How then does the baptism of little children agree thereto, when there were no little children there ? If it proves any thing at all respecting the baptism of a believer's children, it



proves too much, *viz.* that the adult children of a believer must be baptized on account of their connection with him, for such only can agree with Noah's sons: and it will also prove, that not only a man's own adult children, but also his wife, and the adult children of others, should all be baptized upon his single profession; for without this it cannot agree to Noah's wife and his son's wives. But as the author does not admit that this passage warrants the baptism of *adults* upon the profession of another, (though such are the only persons here mentioned,) surely, with much more reason may we deny, that it warrants the baptism of little children, when we are sure that there were none such among them.

In whatever respect, therefore, baptism agrees with the salvation of these eight persons, it cannot be in having little children for its subjects; and this is clear from the passage itself:—"Baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The answer of a good conscience is the effect of faith in Christ, as delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, and consists in the conscious sense of the remission of our sins, peace with God, and freedom of access unto a throne of grace, which could never be obtained by the typical sacrifices or purifications, see Heb. ix. 9, 13, 14. chap. x. 1, 2, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22. Now, baptism being the sign of that purgation in the blood of Christ, which gives the answer of a good conscience, it cannot be administered to any but such as appear by their profession to have their consciences thus purified by faith in Christ's blood, of which infants can give no evidence.



To affirm, that little children are “visibly saved, *on account* of their connection with their parents,” is, in my opinion, a very self-righteous doctrine. It has been already shewn, that we cannot, according to the scriptures, look upon any as *visibly* saved, without looking upon them as *really* saved;—because the former is the very evidence or appearance of the latter;—because we neither can nor ought to distinguish them;—and, chiefly, because Christ hath purchased no *visible* salvation for any, in distinction from a *spiritual, everlasting, and real* one. If then children are *visibly* saved on account of their connection with their parents, they must also, in our estimation, be *really* saved ON THAT ACCOUNT. This is fine doctrine indeed! and, if it be not putting the parent in the place of Christ, it looks something like it. It can easily be conceived how children may obtain temporal deliverances in connection with, and even on account of their parents, such as the salvation from the deluge, and redemption from Egypt; but the gospel salvation comes by another connection, and must be placed to another account. Will the author affirm, that he himself was even *visibly saved*, (as he calls it,) on account of his connection with his parents? and does he teach his children, that they are saved, on account of their connection with him? If neither he nor his children can take the comfort of this connection for their own salvation, what is he contending for all this time? Surely that must be a salvation unworthy of the gospel that cannot be trusted to.

He says, “*Visible* salvation is by baptism; but *real* salvation is through the shedding of Christ’s blood.” If he means by this, that baptism is the *sign* of *visible*, but not of *real* salvation by Christ’s blood,

I have already shown this to be contrary to scripture, an unworthy view of the ordinance, and altogether absurd. But if he means, that baptism *itself* saves visibly, I ask, What does it save from? It does not put away the filth of the flesh, like the legal purifications, nor does it save the body from slavery or death, like the typical salvations; and the apostle tells us, that it cannot save the soul, or purge the conscience, but by the death and resurrection of Christ.—What idea then shall we affix to this *visible* salvation by baptism?—a salvation which he distinguishes from *real* salvation by the blood of Christ;—a salvation which does not benefit either soul or body;—a salvation which must not be trusted to, but mocks our hopes, eludes our search, and flies our grasp, like the baseless fabric of a vision. Is such a fancy as this worthy the God of salvation? Is it even worthy the name of salvation? In short, it comports with nothing but those other dreams and imaginations with which the author has furnished out his whole pamphlet from beginning to end.

#### Of the ACTION called BAPTISM.

Our author owns, that baptism is *dipping* or *plunging* in water, as the word frequently signifies this; but then he thinks it bears another sense in 1 Cor. x. 2. though he does not tell us what it there signifies. He then proceeds to assert roundly, that “Those who have water poured out or shed forth upon them, or are sprinkled with water, are baptized with water, according to the language of the New Testament;” for this he cites Mark i. 8. Acts i. 5. But none of these passages speak of *pouring* or *sprinkling* water, but of *baptizing* in it; and the question still returns, What

does that mean? This he thinks may be gathered from baptism in the Holy Ghost, which is said to be *poured out*, or *shed forth* upon men, Acts ii. 16, 17, 33. chap. xi. 15, 16. Should we remind him, that the Holy Ghost was so poured out upon men as to *fill them* with it, and that therefore, according to this argument, they must also be filled with water in baptizing them; he will tell us, that this is a *foolish assertion*, and that *filling* men with the Holy Ghost, and *baptizing* them therewith, are as distinct as *cause* and *effect*! Thus he proves that baptism is either plunging, pouring, or sprinkling. In opposition to which I observe,

1. That the Greek word βαπτίζω, baptize, is never translated into English, when the ordinance of baptism is intended. *Baptize* is not a translation, but an adoption of the Greek word. The translators were virtually forbid to render it into English in the instructions they received from King James,\* by which people are left to affix any idea to it which the custom of the country suggests; and so, in this country, it is generally understood to mean the sprinkling, or pouring of a little water on the face of an infant: whereas *baptize*, signifies to *dip*, *immerse* or *plunge* in any thing, especially liquids, and in this ordinance, to *dip* or *immerse* the body in water. The Pœdobaptists themselves generally acknowledge this sense of the word, and that immersion was the practice of the apostles, and continued in the church for at least thirteen centuries after.

All the methods by which the sense of any word can be found, fix the sense of βαπτίζω, baptize, to be *immersion*. Should we trace it to its primary root, or

\* See a Copy of these instructions in Lewis's History of the English Translations of the Bible.



follow it in all its derivatives and compounds; should we consult all the Greek lexicons of any note; or take the surer method of observing its constant and uniform use in Greek authors and translators, before the practice of sprinkling took place, we shall find all agree in fixing this as the common and proper acceptation of that word, and meet with no circumstance that will oblige us to depart from it.

This word, like most others, may indeed sometimes be used in a secondary, figurative, or allusive sense. Words are often chosen, not so much for their strict literal signification, as for some analogy or striking similitude they bear to the subject; but the proper sense of words cannot be fixed from such use of them. Thus our Lord represents his sufferings by a cup which the father had given him to drink, John xviii. 11. but the nature of his sufferings will neither explain the meaning of the word *cup*, nor the action of *drinking* it. These sufferings are likewise called a *baptism*, Luke xii. 50. but from this we cannot fix the meaning of that word, or the action thereby signified, as it is only figuratively used, to represent the greatness of his sufferings, even as they are set forth in Old Testament metaphors, by his sinking in deep mire, and coming into deep waters, where the floods overflow him, Psal. lxi. 1, 2. It is said of Israel, that they "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea," 1 Cor. x. 2. but Israel's being *under the cloud*, and *passing through the sea*, ver. 1. (which was a wall upon their right hand and left,) though it was a kind of immersion, yet it does not determine with precision the meaning of the word; for here was no action performed by one man upon another, as our Lord enjoins, nor was there a close contact of the water with their bodies, as there must be in Christian baptism.



It has been argued, that as baptism in the Holy Ghost is expressed by *pouring him out* on men, therefore baptism in water must be performed by *pouring* water on them. But the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost is variously expressed in the scriptures: It is called *anointing*, *filling* with, *giving* of, *pouring out* of the Holy Ghost, and believers are said to have all been *made to drink* into one Spirit. Now, which of all these expressions alludes to the manner of baptism in water? If it be said, *pouring* alludes to it; I ask, upon what authority is this affirmed? The scripture does not call this expression *baptizing* more than the rest. The truth is, all these are but different expressions for the same thing, *viz.* the giving of the Holy Ghost; but none of them are expressive of the manner of that action called *baptism*, nor so much as allude to it. *Pouring* in particular, does not allude to the manner of *baptizing*; but to that of *anointing*; see Acts x. 38. 2 Cor. i. 21. 1 John ii. 27. the manner of which was by *pouring*, see Exod. **xxix.** 7. Matth. **xxvi.** 7. and it also alludes to the *watering* of fields to make them fruitful, for under this metaphor the effusion of the Spirit is often set forth; see Isa. **xliv.** 3, 4. chap. **xxxii.** 15. compared with Heb. **vi.** 4, 7, 8.

The extraordinary effusion of the Spirit is called *baptism*, in allusion to baptism in water; and, excepting in one place, is always joined with it by a similarity of phrase. Thus Acts i. 5. "John baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost;" where it is plain, that giving the Holy Ghost is called *baptizing*, by a figure of speech borrowed from water baptism. Instances of this kind are innumerable in scripture. Jesus, calling Simon and An-

drew from their fishing, says, "I will make you fishers of men;" which is an expression taken from the employment they were then engaged in; and, as it would be very improper to explain the manner of fishing from the practice of the apostles in preaching the gospel, it must be equally so to explain the action of baptizing in water, by the manner in which the Spirit was given, for which there are various expressions besides that of baptism: But when we consider that this extraordinary effusion of the Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, *filled all the house where they were sitting*, then it is plain they must have been *immersed* in it, according to the proper sense of the word.

The word *καταίζω* is rendered *washing* in Mark vii. 4. and it is alleged, that the utensils there mentioned cannot be supposed to be *plunged* in water. But if we look into the law about cleansing defiled vessels, &c. we shall find, this was to be done by *plunging* or *putting them into the water*. "Whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, whatsoever vessel it be wherein any work is done, it must be *put into water*," Lev. xi. 32. And though the Jews are blamed for their superstition in holding things unclean that were not so by the law, yet they are not accused of using any other method of cleansing than the law prescribed.

Mr. Huddleston asserts, that the washing of hands is also called baptism, Mat. xv. 2. Mark vii. 3.\* But in this he is mistaken, for the word there is not *καταίζω*, but *νίπτω*, which is the word used for washing of hands; and as for the baptism mentioned, Mark vii. 4. Luke

\* Letters, p. 98.

xi. 38. it does not signify the washing of hands, but the bathing or immersion of the whole body. The baptisms mentioned, Heb. ix. 10. were not every kind of washing, but the divers baptisms prescribed by the law for unclean persons, which were performed by *bathing* in water. Thus Numb. xix. 19—"And on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and *bathe* himself in water, and shall be clean at even." And the apostle calls these bathings *divers baptisms*, because they were performed on different occasions, and for various kinds of uncleanness; see Lev. xv. 5, 8, 11, 13, 21, 22, 27. chap. xvi. 26, 28. chap. xvii. 15. 16. Numb. xix. 7, 8, 19. But with respect to the manner of applying the blood, water, and ashes of the heifer, (Numb. xix. 17, 18.) he does not call that *baptism*, but (*rhantismos*) *sprinkling*, as it really was, Heb. ix. 13.

Had this ordinance included every mode of WASHING, it would not have been expressed by *baptizo*, but by *luo*, as in Acts xvi. 33. 1 Cor. vi. 11. 2 Pet. ii. 22. or *nipito*, as in John xiii. 6. 10. Matth. xv. 2. chap. xxvii. 24. or *pluno*, as in Luke v. 2.—Had it been SPRINKLING, it would have been expressed by *rhan-tizo*, as in Heb. ix. 13, 19. chap. x. 22. and xii. 24. 1 Pet. i. 2.—Had it been POURING, then the word would have been *cheo* or *chuo*, as in Luke x. 34. Acts ii. 17, 33. chap. x. 45. But as this ordinance is neither *washing* in general, nor the modes of *sprinkling* and *pouring* in particular; so it is distinguished from these by another term, and which has a different signification, viz. to *dip*, *immerse*, or *plunge*.

It is remarkable that we have the three words, *dip*, *sprinkle*, and *pour* occurring sometimes in the compass of two verses, and distinguished as three different suc-



cessive actions to be performed with the same thing, which demonstrates that they are not of the same import. Thus, the LXX in Lev. iv. 6, 7. "And the priest shall (*bapsei*) *dip* his finger in the blood, and (*prosranei*) *sprinkle* of the blood seven times before the Lord, and before the veil of the sanctuary,—and shall (*ekchei*) *pour out* all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt-offering." Now, had the priest presumed to convert *bapto* here into *sprinkling* or *pouring*, he would have perverted the whole of this typical institution, been guilty of rebellion against the Lord, and might justly have expected immediate vengeance: and shall we think that the words of our Lord's commission are less plain and determinate than those of the law, and that we are at greater liberty to quibble upon, and alter them at pleasure?

The translators, in other cases, have rendered the primitive word *bapto* by the English word *dip*, wherever it occurs in the New Testament; see Matth. xxvi. 23. Mark xiv. 20. Luke xvi. 24. John xiii. 26. Rev. xix. 13. and had they in like manner translated it when expressive of this ordinance, every one would have known what action our Lord enjoins, when he says, *baptizing them*. They would then have seen, that men could no more be baptized by *sprinkling* or *pouring*, than they could eat the Lord's Supper by *seeing* or *smelling*.

2. Neither *sprinkle* nor *pour* will make sense when substituted in place of the word *baptize*. They will not construe with (*ἐν*) IN, or (*εἰς*) INTO, one of which is always affixed to the word *baptize*, when the thing into which men are baptized is mentioned. For instance, John baptized (*ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ*) *in Jordan*, or (*εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην*)



into Jordan, Matth. iii. 6. Mark. i. 9. we have also (ἐν ὕδατι) *in* water, (ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ) *in* the Holy Ghost, Matth. iii. 11. (εἰς τὸν Μωσὴν) *into* Moses, 1 Cor. x. 2. (εἰς Χριστόν) *into* Christ, Gal. iii. 27. Rom. vi. 3. This then being the uniform style of the original, let us try what language it will make with *sprinkling* or *pouring*. "Teach all nations, *pouring* them (εἰς) *into* the name, &c.—And were *poured* of John *in* Jordan.—I indeed *pour* you *in* water—he shall *pour* you *in* the Holy Ghost," &c. This is strange style, and does not make sense; for it conveys an idea as if the persons themselves were poured as liquids into any thing. The like observation may be made on the other passages where baptism is mentioned, such as, "He that believeth and is *poured*," &c. Mark xvi. 16.—"Into what then were ye *poured*?" Acts xix. 3, &c. which answers only to liquids, not persons. But if we substitute the word *dip* or *immerse*, which is the true English of the Greek word, then the sense is clear.

Neither will *sprinkle* answer for the word *baptize*; for how would it sound to say, "*Sprinkle* them *in* water, *sprinkle* them *into* Jordan," &c.? This conveys the idea of any thing thrown in small scattered portions into water, and cannot suit persons. The translators were sensible of this impropriety; and therefore, instead of *in* or *into*, they have given us *with*,\* to make it agree with sprinkling, except in such places as it would not answer, such as Matth. iii. 5. Mark i. 9. Rom. vi. 3. Gal. iii. 27. Acts xix. 3. and yet the original words are the same in the other passages as in these. Thus it is evident, that pouring or sprink-

\* *Ev* cannot be rendered *with* in the case of baptism, because the other word *εἰς* cannot be so rendered.

ling, if substituted for baptism, are both contrary to scripture, and all propriety of speech.

3. The circumstances of our Lord's baptism, and of the eunuch's, shew it to have been immersion. Jesus was baptized of John (εις) *into* Jordan, Mark i. 9. for he went up *out of* the water, and so must have been down in it, Matth. iii. 16. With regard to the eunuch nothing can be plainer. They came first (επιτι ὑδωρ) *to*, or *upon* a certain water, Acts viii. 36. and this is all the length that some will allow them to have come; but, the text adds further, "and they went down both (εις το ὑδωρ) *into* the water," ver. 38. where Philip baptized him; and when this was performed, we have them coming (ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος) "*out of* the water." ver. 39.

4. The places which John chose for baptizing prove it to be immersion, *viz.* Jordan and Enon. His reason for chusing the latter place, we are expressly told, was "because there was *much water* there," John iii. 23. which could only be necessary for immersion. Some, however, have diminished the waters at Enon into small shallow rivulets, to prevent immersion if possible; and no doubt they would have done the same with Jordan, if they were not more afraid of a sneer, than of wresting the scriptures; for they would rather turn the whole country into a dry parched wilderness, than suffer John to immerse any. But that we may swell these waters at Enon again to a proper depth, let it be noticed, that the words ὕδατα πολλὰ *much water*, or *many waters*, are the same that are used Rev. i. 15. chap. xiv. 2. chap. xix. 6. which do not signify the purling or murmuring of shallow brooks or rivulets, but the boisterous roaring of great

waters like those of the sea, for it is compared to the voice of mighty thunderings; and that the land of Canaan was abundantly supplied with *deep* waters, is evident from Deut. viii. 7.

5. The allusions which the apostle makes to baptism point out the manner of the action. Christians are said to be baptized into the death of Christ, to be *buried* with him by baptism, and therein also to be risen with him, Rom. vi. 3, 4. Col. ii. 12. But if there were no kind of burial in baptism, how could it be alluded to as the sign of our burial with Christ? In whatever sense we are buried, it cannot be in baptism, if there is no burial there; nor can there be any propriety in mentioning baptism as the sign of a resurrection, if no such thing is to be seen in it. But when we consider, that baptism is a burial in, and a resurrection from water, the similitude is striking, and these passages clear and simple.

Here our author tells us, that "they are baptized into the truth testified by the Three that bear record in heaven concerning Jesus. This makes baptism (he should have said *sprinkling* or *pouring*) a proper representation of his death and resurrection, and of guilty men's having fellowship with him in his death and resurrection." That is, in short, the thing signified makes any kind of sign a proper representation of it! and, by the same rule, he might have told us, that we *eat* Christ's flesh and *drink* his blood by faith, and this makes any other kind of sign, as well as *eating* the broken bread and *drinking* the cup, a proper representation thereof. But the main thing we should attend unto is the will of the Great Instigator, who hath expressly appointed the sign to be

*baptism* or immersion, and not sprinkling or pouring; any other sign than this, be it what it will, is not his ordinance, either in name or thing, and therefore can in no respect be a proper representation, but human invention, whereby the law of Christ is made void.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Yours, &c.



## APPENDIX.

IT may not be improper to add a few more strictures on what Mr. Huddleston, and others, have advanced, which did not fall in my way in answering the "Remarks."

It is but too common for persons, when they cannot confute their antagonist by fair reasoning, to betake themselves to reproach and invectives; and hence it is, that the charge of self-righteousness is brought against us for denying infant sprinkling. Mr. Glas says, that "The denial of infant-baptism comes of making the salvation by baptism to lie in something else than the thing signified, even in that, whatever it be, which distinguishes the adult Christian from his infant, though our Lord expressly declares, that we must enter his kingdom even as infants enter it."—"This (says Mr. Huddleston) interferes with every argument brought to support the denial of infant-baptism.\*—Our denying infant-baptism because we cannot see them of the true Israel, will be followed with this consequence, that we have something about us which shews us of the true Israel, that has no respect to our infants entitling them to our regard as such Israelites; †—and this is influenced by the notion, that we become members of this Israel by some ability which distinguishes us from our helpless infants. ‡—The true reason for not admitting infants to baptism, is, the effect of making our salvation to lie in that which distinguishes us from them."§

\* Letters, p. 36. † Ibid, p. 37. ‡ Ibid, p. 38. § Ibid, p. 40.

This argument (if it may be called one) reminds me of what Archbishop Tillotson says of transubstantiation; "It will suffer nothing to be true but itself." But how does all this prove, that Christ hath commanded infants to be baptized? The question about their baptism must be determined by scripture, and not by the self-righteous disposition of those who deny it; for suppose all the deniers of infant-baptism were nothing but a parcel of self-righteous Pharisees, it would no more prove infant-baptism, than Mr. Huddleston's holding it in connection with the church of Rome,\* will prove the contrary. Self-righteousness can find access upon either side of this controversy. It has a deeper root in our hearts than to shift its quarters upon our changing sides in an argument, and can find its account even in contending for the truth. I have however, in my second letter to Mr. Glas, demonstrated that this charge is false so far as it relates to our reasons for denying infant-baptism, which is all that belongs to the merits of the cause.

We firmly believe, and readily acknowledge, that infants are as capable of the grace of God, or of salvation, as adults are, and that adults are saved by that very thing which saves elect infants; but still we deny that infants are proper subjects of gospel ordinances, such as hearing the word, baptism, the Lord's Supper, &c. These ordinances were never intended for them in infancy, nor are they capable of any benefit from them. He owns himself that infants cannot understand or believe the gospel; † nor can they discern the thing signified in baptism, for this is the same with understanding and believing the gospel.

\* Letters, p. 34.

† Ibid, p. 54, 57, 62.

When we say that infants can reap no benefit by the ordinances, we do not mean that they cannot be saved, but only that these ordinances are not the means of edification to them as they are to adults. The benefit of baptism, as well as of the word preached, and the Lord's Supper, can only be enjoyed in understanding and believing what is represented by them; for as the evident end of these ordinances is to represent and set forth something to us for our instruction, edification, and comfort, these ends are gained, only so far as the thing represented is discerned or believed, see Heb. iv. 2. Acts viii. 37. 1 Pet. iii. 21. 1 Cor xi. 29.\* We must not imagine, that the water in baptism operates in the way of a charm, as the Papists believe of their holy water; or that the sacred name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is to be used as a spell, having no respect to the understanding of the subject. No; it is an emblematical preaching to the judgment of the person baptized, and a comfortable pledge to him of the remission of his sins, and of his fellowship with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, for the strengthening of his faith, the confirmation of his hope, and so to influence his love to,

\* This Mr. Glas fairly owns, where he says, "For this is the nature of the ordinances of divine service in the New Testament, that they are not complete in the outward and visible action, which is no more but the mean of engaging us in, or of expressing outwardly, the nature of the ordinance, which is spiritual and invisible: Thus baptism is not complete in the washing of the body with water, without the sprinkling of the heart from an evil conscience, which is the substance of that ordinance, as we may see from Peter's words, 1 Pet. iii. 21.—And so when a believer of the gospel eats of the bread, and drinks of the cup, without feasting with God, as has been said, upon Christ's sacrifice, we may say, he did not eat the Lord's Supper." Glas's Works, vol. iv. p. 174, 175.



and obedience of the gospel. Though infants can reap no benefit by gospel ordinances, of which they know nothing, yet they are at no loss, since the elect among them obtain that salvation represented by them, as well as the adult believer does. Adults have no ground to glory over infants on account of any thing they do in the use of these ordinances, for the ordinances themselves hold forth no ground of hope to them, but what is equally free and efficacious for the salvation of infants who are incapable of observing them.

We are charged with laying a self-righteous stress on the profession of the faith; but a profession must at least be so far necessary to baptism, as to satisfy the baptizer (who cannot search the heart) that the person is a proper subject of that ordinance. And in this we agree with Mr. Glas, who says, "By this profession ONLY we (who cannot search the hearts of men) are capable to know the members of Christ in this world;—whilst that appearance is to be seen in any person, there we must see a member of the body of Christ.—So far then as any continue in the confession of the word of the truth of the gospel, as it is the word of God, and as it sanctifies them, distinguishing them from the world,—so far they are proper objects of that love which he requires towards the known elect in his new commandment."\* Now, this is the place we assign to a profession, and is all the stress we lay upon it with respect to baptism. We find that Philip demands it of the eunuch to clear his way for baptizing him, Acts viii. 37. and Mr Glas says, that baptism "cannot be administered to any but upon a con-

\* Glas's Works, vol. iv. p. 38, 123.



profession, by which the baptized can be called disciples according to the scripture." To set aside the profession of the faith by which alone we can discern who are disciples (i. e. persons *instructed* or *taught* in the truth, as the word imports) would be to overthrow at once the whole grounds of separation from the world, or any method by which it could be effected.

Mr. Huddleston himself owns, "that a profession of faith before baptism does not indicate our disaffection to the salvation represented therein." \* A condescending concession indeed ! How then comes self-righteousness to be connected with this profession in the Baptists more than in others ? Because, says he, we "deny that this profession gives our infants the same appearance of being in a state of salvation, and the same title to baptism it gives us ; for while this is the case with us, it is impossible we should not have some self-righteous stress resting upon our profession." † This is a very strange reason indeed ! He blames us for laying too much stress upon a profession, yet when he comes to explain himself, the blame falls on the opposite side. We hold, that a profession indicates only the faith or state of the individual person that makes it, and cannot answer for any other, however nearly related to him by blood ; whereas Mr. Huddleston thinks that a man's single profession is sufficient to denominate the whole of his house holy and of the kingdom of heaven, and so subjects of baptism : Now, I think it requires very little penetration to determine which of us lays the greatest stress upon a profession. Should a man's house, for instance, consist of ten persons, our author would lay ten times

\* Letters, p. 39.

† Ibid.

more stress upon the parent's profession than we can admit of. It is certain, the scripture lays more stress upon Adam's sin, and Christ's obedience, than upon the sin or obedience of any other individual that ever existed; and I leave you to judge, whether he does not lay something of a similar stress upon the parent's profession. Does he not make the parent a representative of his house in the faith and profession of the gospel, even as Christ is of the whole household of faith in his finished work? Yet this is the man that charges self-righteousness upon those who dare not in their consciences build such a fabric upon their profession!

But I cannot think he grounds this charge of self-righteousness solely upon this foundation. What he intends to insinuate is, that we deny that infants are capable of salvation, and his reason for this can be no other than our denying them to be capable of baptism; for he does not appear to understand how those who deny their baptism can believe their salvation. Hence it is that he puts the question, "Upon what does the author rest his opinion, that there are elect infants to obtain this salvation in infancy?"\*—Remove the baptism of infants, and the very basis upon which he rests his opinion of their election and salvation is overturned. Deny this, and it appears to him a "denying that any infants can appear from scripture to be elected to this salvation."† When we see the author gravely and earnestly combating his own shadow, in order to prove, what was never denied, that infants as well as adults are of the kingdom of heaven,‡ what propriety can we see in all this reasoning, if it be not

\* Letters, p. 37.

† Ibid, p. 37.

‡ Ibid, p. 39.

his opinion, that to deny the baptism of infants, is the same as to deny their being of the kingdom of heaven? Now, if we trace this sentiment to its source, we shall find it proceeds from his making baptism necessary to salvation; for if he cannot see how the salvation of infants can be held without baptizing them, then their baptism and salvation must be so inseparably connected in his mind, as that a denial of the former, necessarily implies to him a disbelief of the latter.

This is the only foundation upon which his charge of self-righteousness can stand consistently. It is indeed the old argument upon which infant-baptism was at first introduced, and upon which the Papists and many ignorant Protestants hold it to this day; and hence we may account for the solicitude of parents to have their children christened (as they call it) when in danger of death. Now, if this be not placing salvation in something else than the thing signified by baptism, it looks too like it. The author perhaps will be loath to admit this; but, (to return him his own words with a little variation,) "there wants but a suitable occasion, with all his caution, to make this fully manifest. Men are more ready to place that confidence in baptism which belongs to the thing signified, than directly to own it; nay, they show themselves very unwilling to own it, whilst all their reasoning for infant-baptism, from first to last, serves to demonstrate it. Let the pretended friends of divine sovereignty be gravely told, that their little children may be members of the kingdom of heaven, and saved without their faith, and even without baptism, and it may open a view to the hypocrisy of their friendship."

This author asks, "Whether or not does the *appearance* of Christ's kingdom in this world include



every *age*, as well as sort of men, that shall obtain salvation through his sufferings, death, and resurrection?"\* To this I answer,

Though all the true subjects of this kingdom appear at one time or other in this world, (their bodies being as visible as those of others,) yet they are not all visible to us in that respect which denominates them Christ's subjects; of such are elect infants, who cannot, and many adults who do not, give proper evidence to us thereof; so that here is an *age*, as well as sort of men, which do not belong to the appearance of Christ's kingdom in this world, and yet obtain salvation through his death and resurrection. These we call the *unknown elect*, and agree with Mr. Glas in distinguishing the known elect from them by the profession of the faith. The *appearance* of Christ's kingdom in this world includes no *age* or sort of men of all the innumerable company that shall be saved, but such as confess the faith, and give evidence to their fellow men that they know the truth. But we cannot say how great a multitude may be saved that are not included in the *appearance* of Christ's kingdom in this world, both infants and adults. It is probable the greatest number of his subjects are not included in that *appearance*.

He asks further, "upon what we rest our opinion that there are elect infants, since we do not allow that they are visible subjects of the new covenant?"†

*Answ.* We rest our opinion and firm belief, that there are elect infants, not upon their being the children of believers, nor upon the faith and profession of their parents, nor upon any passage of scripture that inseparably connects the salvation of a man's

\* Letters, p. 37.

† Ibid, p. 37.



house with his own salvation ; but upon the scripture doctrine of election itself ; which election, the apostle says, took place before men were born, Rom. ix. 11. before the foundation of the world, Eph. i. 4. so that there must be elect infants, else there would be no elect at all, for all mankind are infants before they become adults. Election is not influenced by their having done good or evil, but is according to the sovereign good pleasure of God's will, who hath mercy upon whom he will, Rom. ix. 11, 15, 18. and hence we conclude, that it will stand as firm and sure with regard to that part of the elect who die in infancy as with respect to those of them who survive the infant state, and shew their calling and election by their love and obedience to the truth. But were it our opinion, that election went upon what distinguishes the adult believer from his infant, or any thing done by man, (whatever it be,) then we must either deny the salvation of those who die in infancy, or hold with the Papists, that baptism saves them, or with the author, that they are saved by the faith of their parents. Our Lord says expressly of little children, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven," Mark x. 4. This clearly shows, that there are elect infants ; and, for my own part, I am much inclined to judge favourably of the state of all infants dying in infancy.

He observes, that the churches are exhorted to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Eph. vi. 4. which does not suit with their being considered *out of the Lord.*" \* It is indeed the indispensable duty of Christian parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the

\* Letters, p. 31.

Lord, *i. e.* to give them such correction and instruction as the Lord hath enjoined in his word. They are their peculiar charge by the very law of nature ; and the gospel obliges Christian parents to study the good of their souls as well as of their bodies, to set a godly example before them, and to instruct them in the doctrines of the Christian faith : but how does this duty of the believing parent prove that his children are *in the Lord*, or the proper subjects of baptism ? Were not the apostles commanded to teach all nations the doctrine of the Lord ? And did this not suit with the nations being considered *out of the Lord* ? Is a parent free from all obligations of duty to his children, unless he can consider them as saved ? The apostle addressing those who were married to unbelievers, says, “ What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband ? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife ? ” 1 Cor. vii. 16. even so it may be said in this case, What knowest thou, O parent, whether thou shalt save thy child ? When this appears to be the case by the profession of their faith, then must they be considered as *in the Lord* ; then may they be baptized, but not before.

But Eph. vi. 4. is foreign to the point, for it speaks not of infant children, but of such as are capable of *admonition* : the word *υποταγη* signifies to fix instruction upon their minds. In ver. 1. these children are exhorted to obey their parents in the Lord ; and in ver. 4. fathers are forbid to provoke their children to wrath, but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ; so that here are exhortations to the mutual duties of parents and children, even as of husbands and wives, masters and servants, &c. which shows that the children here intended are not mere infants, but

believing children, visible members of the churches, capable of receiving and obeying the word of exhortation, which he enforces by its being the first commandment with promise, ver. 2, 3. and a duty well pleasing to the Lord, Col. iii. 20. As to the expression *in the Lord*, it does not intimate any *peculiar* spiritual connection betwixt a parent and his children: Christians are exhorted to marry only *in the Lord*, 1 Cor. vii. 39. wives to submit to their own husbands *in the Lord*, Col. iii. 18. This phrase signifies, either that they should obey their believing parents who are in the Lord, and so it is an additional motive of obedience; or, that they should obey in the Lord their parents, i. e. in the fear of the Lord, manifesting their subjection to him in so doing, and then it agrees with the exhortation to servants, Col. iii. 22, 23. Eph. vi. 5, 6, 7, 8.

The argument from circumcision seems to be almost given up by the Scots Independents. The anonymous writer of the Remarks, has not so much as mentioned it, and Mr. Huddleston has sapped the very foundation of it, where he says, "The promise which is to believers and their children, belongs to the covenant made after those days; and it was never said to Abraham, thou shalt be saved and thy house."\* Here he fairly owns, that the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham, was not the same with the new covenant to which baptism belongs, and consequently he cannot argue from the circumcision of infants under the former, for the baptism of such under the latter. But whilst he distinguishes the covenants, he confounds the distinction of the seeds, and so makes baptism to

\* Letters, p. 63.



belong to the natural seed of believers, even as circumcision belonged to the fleshly seed of Abraham. "As to what is observed (says he) of *natural* and *spiritual*, parents and children are alike, both natural and both spiritual.\*—The fleshly seed of New Testament believers are really the spiritual seed of Abraham." † When we remind him, that the spiritual seed, or sons of God, under the New Testament, are described as "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 12, 13.—that "the children of the flesh are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed—even the called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles," Rom. ix. 3, 24—that therefore we cannot henceforth know any man after the flesh, or by his descent from religious ancestors, as in the Jewish church, but "that if any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 16, 17. to these, and such passages, he replies, Will the infants of believers being born of the flesh, prevent their being typified by Israelitish infants? Could these infants typify any other sort of persons but what are born of the flesh?—I suppose believers are the same way born of the flesh that their infants are, were they not therefore typified by Abraham's fleshly seed?" ‡ This approaches very near to a burlesque of these passages.

But the Holy Ghost, in denying that the spiritual seed are the children of the flesh, or born of blood, &c. does not mean that they come into the world in a different way from others, or that they are without natural parents; but the meaning is, that their natural birth, be it of whom it may, can neither *constitute* them the

\* Letters, p. 45.

† Ibid, p. 73.

‡ Ibid, p. 75.



spiritual seed, nor *distinguish* them as such to us. The covenant of circumcision was made with the fleshly seed of Abraham, and so their natural birth, by which they descended from him, sufficiently distinguished them in infancy as the subjects of circumcision; but the new covenant to which baptism belongs, respects only the spiritual seed who are born again; and as these are not known to us till they profess the faith, it is demonstrably clear that they cannot be baptized in infancy. Thus stands the argument from circumcision, which, with the distinction of the covenants, I have fully handled in my seventh Letter to Mr. Glas.

Nothing can be more agreeable to scripture than what Mr. Glas advances upon the distinction of the fleshly and spiritual seed, throughout the greatest part of his writings. The whole of his excellent treatise on the kingdom of Christ as not of this world, is founded upon that distinction. There he tells us, that "the earthly birth, or that birth after the flesh, availed much in the state of the church erected at Sinai, as to the enjoyment of the privileges of it. But now, our Lord says to Nicodemus, Except a man be born again, (or from above,) he cannot see the kingdom of God." &c. \* Would not any one think, that he here sets aside the fleshly birth, or connection with believing parents, as of no account in the kingdom of Christ? But it seems he meant no such thing; for, by his rule of distinguishing the infant subjects of the kingdom of heaven, he gives as much place to the fleshly birth, as ever it had in the Jewish church, and so builds again the things which he destroyed.

But if his adherents will still maintain, that he keeps this distinction clear and consistent, I should be

\* Glas's Works, vol. i. p. 53.

glad to be informed wherein it lies. The distinction does not lie in this, that the holiness of believers' children comes not by natural generation; for neither did that of old Israel come by natural generation, but by a covenant separating them and their seed to be a peculiar people to the Lord:—Nor does it lie in this, that the word of God declares the infants of believers holy; for so does it declare those of old Israel:—Neither does the distinction lie in this, that the fleshly birth does not entitle to the spiritual privileges of Christ's kingdom; for neither did it entitle to the temporal privileges of the earthly kingdom. Old Israel obtained the earthly inheritance by the covenant made with their father Abraham, Gen. xv. 18. abstract from this, they had no claim to it upon the footing of their birth or righteousness more than any other people, Deut. ix. 4, 5, 6. Wherein, then, did the fleshly birth avail more formerly than it does now? or what is the foundation of the above distinction? If his arguments for infant pouring (so he leads us to call it) hold good, it undeniably follows, that the earthly birth, or that birth after the flesh, avails *more* in the kingdom of God, than ever it did in the state of the church erected at Sinai; for then it could only distinguish the *fleshly seed* of Abraham, who were typically holy, and entitled to the temporal privileges of the earthly kingdom; whereas, under the gospel, he makes it to distinguish the *spiritual seed* of Christ, who are truly holy, and entitled to the spiritual and everlasting privileges of the kingdom of heaven.

I shall conclude these miscellaneous observations with a word or two upon Dr. Stuart's Sermon on the Kingdom of Christ.\* Speaking of the distinction of

\* When the author wrote this, Dr. Stuart was not a Baptist, but he became one soon after.

Christ's subjects from the world, he says, "They are such as *know* the Father as he hath discovered him;—*receive* and are *firmly persuaded* of the divine authority in Christ's words;—are brought into a delightful and complacential *union* with one another;—are preserved in this, and in union with God, by the *words* of Jesus;—through these too partake of his ineffable joy."\* Distinguishing them from the subjects of the earthly kingdom by the nature of their *birth*, he says, that John gives an account of the way that subjects were born to God under the law, John i. 10—14. but that the new and heavenly birth by which men enter into the kingdom of God, is set forth in Christ's discourse with Nicodemus, chap. iii. 1—6. † He distinguishes also their *holiness*: "Israel indeed was a holy nation; but the national holiness of Israel was only outward and typical. They were a holy people by virtue of their descent from the sons of Jacob, and by virtue of their observation of the covenant made with them at Sinai. But the holiness of Christ's kingdom is the substance of this. All his subjects are *really* and *internally*, as well as outwardly holy."‡ He denies that they can be distinguished without *charity*: "Outward appearances, which fall short of proving persons possessed of charity, shall no more *mark them out*, as once, the subjects of the kingdom of God."§ He rejects the distinction between the subjects of Christ's kingdom as it appears in this world, and the spiritually holy nation of them that are saved, as a distinction only suited to a national church. "The apostles describe the kingdom of Christ by names, privileges and characters, which do not belong, nay, are

\* Page 4.    † Page 8. note.    ‡ Ibid.    § Page 5.



opposite to these which belong to the kingdoms of this world. They write *to* every particular congregation or church, and *of* them, as consisting of these, all of whom without exception they judged to be the children of God, chosen, redeemed, called, and separated from the world.—None, it is evident, were Christians in the sight or opinions of the apostles, who they were not bound to think, and did not think, Christians in God's sight."\*

I confess I was much edified and delighted with his description of Christ's subjects, and my heart warmed in love to the author for the truth's sake, which he so clearly and boldly maintains through the most of that Sermon. But how great was my disappointment when I advanced to page 43, and found him distinguishing the subjects of Christ's kingdom by characters very different from the above! No sooner does he turn his thoughts to infant-baptism, than his views of the kingdom are immediately corrupted, and losing sight of the grand hinge of the difference, he descends into mere trifling with the national church about *sponsors*, *bastards*, and *foundlings*; as if the distinction between Christ's subjects and the world stood in the *faith of their parents*, or the *legitimacy* of their carnal birth. Alas, what a falling off is here!

He cannot admit of sponsors, "because all the lines of argument in favour of infant-baptism issue from *the faith of the parent* as their centre; but this device sup-

\* Page 8, 9. His brother, the anonymous Remarker on Scripture Texts, is, however of a very different opinion, and charges those who hold the above sentiment with "deceiving the hearts of those who believe without proper evidence, and blinding the minds of those who receive not the simple sayings of the Son of God." But perhaps this is one of the things on which they have *agreed to differ*.



poses the contrary, at least its doubtfulness."\* Yet the device of sponsors is far more ancient than the device of the parent's faith, though both of them are devices equally void of foundation in the word of God, as marking the baptized with the sign of the cross, and giving them a mixture of milk and honey, a practice at least full as ancient as infant-baptism. After all, what is the parent in this case but a sponsor for his child in the strictest sense of the word? Are the subjects of the kingdom of heaven then to be distinguished by the faith of proxies? Does this distinction correspond with any of the above? Or rather, does it not overthrow them, and make all that has been said upon the subject much ado about nothing? Again, if infant-baptism rest entirely on the faith of the parent, then neither he nor his brethren can be sure they have obtained Christian baptism, unless they know their parents were believers.

As to *bastards* and *foundlings*, where do we find the New Testament distinguishing the subjects of baptism from these? Does the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the carnal birth make any difference in the kingdom of Christ? The Jews indeed claimed a relation to God as his children, from their being Abraham's seed, and *not born of fornication*, like the unlawful issue of idolaters; but our Lord repels their claim upon that footing, and gives them to understand, that unless they believed, continued in his word, loved him and did the works of Abraham, neither the *faith* of Abraham their father, (however distinguished,) nor the *legitimacy* of their carnal birth as descended from him, could avail

\* Page 43. note.

them any thing, as to the enjoyment of the privileges of his kingdom, John viii. 31—48.

Upon the whole, we may affirm, that no man can hold the distinction of the kingdom of Christ from the Jewish theocracy and kingdoms of this world, in any consistency with the arguments for infant-baptism. This point, however trivial it may appear to some, is of such a nature as to affect all our ideas of that distinction, and leaven the whole. For, if we once admit the notion, that the subjects which compose this kingdom, may be known or distinguished by any thing, be it what it will, which comes short of their manifesting their being of the truth, believing it, loving it, hearing Christ's voice, and following him, this single sentiment, if followed out, will infallibly lead us to blend the kingdom of Christ with the world, even in its visible appearance, and make all we advance to the contrary a jumble of inconsistencies.

STRICTURES  
ON  
MR. CARTER'S REMARKS.

*In a Letter to MR. RICHARDS, of Lynn.*

—o—o—o—

DEAR SIR,

IN Mr. Carter's *Remarks* on your *Observations on Infant-sprinkling*, I find very little argument. Others, however, may be of a very different opinion; and hence it may be proper to say something by way of reply. Neither my time at present, nor the bounds of a single sheet, will permit me to enter fully into the subject; and there is the less occasion, as you inform me that you intend to publish. His

Letter I. is taken up with his own vindication. I hope you will do him all manner of justice. In

Letter II. He still contends that the words *bapto* and *baptizo* signify any mode of *washing*, particularly *sprinkling* and *pouring*, but he has not produced one passage where they must necessarily be so understood. Neither Mark vii. 4. nor Luke xi. 38. mention what he calls *unbaptized hands*. There is no such expression in all the scriptures, that I know of; and though there were, it would not favour either *sprinkling* or *pouring*, for hands are not ordinarily washed in such ways. He surely knows that *nipto* is the word for washing hands, Mark vii. 2, 3. and that the *baptism*, ver. 4. is such as was performed on cups, brazen vessels, tables or beds, which is expressed, Lev. xi. 32. by *putting them into water*. Though the Jews held things unclean which really were not so, yet they are not blamed for using a *different mode* of cleansing from

that prescribed in the law for things ceremonially polluted. The *divers baptisms* mentioned Heb. ix. 10. must signify the divers bathings prescribed both to priests and unclean persons, on different occasions; because the apostle distinguishes *sprinkling* from these baptisms by another word, ver. 13. and the law distinguishes dipping, sprinkling, and pouring, as three different actions, Lev. iv. 6, 7.—If the law does not command one man to take another and plunge him under water, must it follow that Christ does not command one man thus to baptize another?—I know not where he finds the scripture using the (derivative) word *baptizo*, “when only part of the body was washed.” If you do, pray dash out this, and conceal my ignorance. The primitive *bapto* is indeed used to express the *dipping* (not the washing) of a finger, Luke xvi. 24. and an hand, Matth. xxvi. 23. but these may be as effectually dipped as the whole body. In

Letter III. He insists that the *promise* Acts ii. 38, 39. is the promise made to Abraham, because the Apostle mentions that promise on another occasion, chap. iii. 19—25. (strange logic indeed!)—and because the blessing of Abraham includes the promise of the Spirit, Gal. iii. 14. as if that was the only promise of the Spirit which Peter could refer to in Acts ii.! Yet Peter speaks not a word of the promise made to Abraham in the whole of that discourse, but cites at large the promise of the Spirit from Joel—shews its begun accomplishment in what was then seen and heard, and applies it to the Jews nearly in the very words of that Prophet—comp. ver. 39. with Joel ii. 32.—By the *children* he understands *infants*, but neither the promise to Abraham, nor that in Joel, speak of infants. “They which are of faith, the same are the children



of Abraham," Gal. iii. 7. "They *which be of faith* are blessed with faithful Abraham," ver. 9. And they "receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith*," or believing, ver. 14. In Joel there is no mention made of any children but the *sons* and *daughters*, who should *prophesy* upon receiving the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; and *these are evidently the CHILDREN the apostle speaks of*.—By "*all that are afar off*," he understands *Gentiles*. But whether Peter by that expression intends *Gentiles* (which, from many considerations, is not likely,) or only *dispersed Jews*, it makes all one as to the argument, since he restricts the *promise to those only whom the Lord shall call*; and none can appear to us the *called* of the Lord, but such as comply with his call to faith and repentance. Nor do we read of any, who were baptized on that occasion, but such as *gladly received* Peter's word, ver. 41. He says,

Letter IV. "The apostle's words (1 Cor. vii. 14.) plainly imply, that in consequence of one of the parents professing the Christian faith, their children are holy; whereas if both were unbelieving their children would be unclean." But his words imply no such thing. The apostle says nothing of the lawful children of two unbelieving parents, nor does he give the least hint that such are unclean. Neither does he make the holiness of the children a *consequence* of one of the parents professing the Christian faith; but of the unbelieving parent being sanctified. "The unbelieving wife (says he) is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now" (since the unbelieving party is sanctified) "are they holy." Now what kind of holiness is it, that thus depends upon the holiness of an unbeliever; "Not an holiness of nature, (says Mr. Carter) but an holiness in themselves, i. e. an holiness of state

derived to them from the believing parent's covenant, or that new covenant in which the believing parent is interested; and therefore *a further holiness* than that of the unbelieving parent."

But where does the apostle thus distinguish the holiness of the children from that of the unbelieving parent? If the children's holiness is derived from the believing parent's covenant, the holiness of the unbeliever must be more *immediately* so; because it is the *medium* through which the holiness of the children is derived, and *without which* they would be unclean, "*else were your children unclean*;" and therefore the children's holiness cannot be a *further holiness* than that of the unbelieving parent through which it comes, but must of necessity be of the very same kind; for new covenant holiness can never depend in any sense upon the sanctification of an unbeliever; nor does it depend upon the sanctification of the believing parent himself, nor even upon the legitimacy of the natural birth. The bastard children of unbelievers may have new covenant holiness, and the legitimate children of believers may want it.

I do not say that the holiness of the children is *originally* derived from the holiness of the unbelieving parent. The holiness of both is *originally* derived from the ordinance of God, making the one a lawful wife to the believer, and *consequently* the other a lawful issue, which was not the case under that law whereby old Israel were separated from the nations. This is the only sense which suits the apostle's argument, and the scruples of the believing Corinthians.

Mr. Carter's account of the children's holiness agrees neither with the holiness of the old nor new covenant, but is only *a piece of corrupted Judaism*. I must not

stay however to examine it. He says, "The state of the unbelieving parent neither is nor can be declared holy;" yet the apostle *declares* that the unbelieving wife (*ἡγιασται*) is *made holy*; must she not therefore be holy? and what more is declared of the children? Goodwin's remark upon the use of *hagia* instead of *kathara* is mere trifling. His

Letter V. begins with the argument from Mark x. 13, 14. Where I find nothing worth noticing except the following quotation.—"*By such* we must understand little ones properly so called."—Granted—"but not *all* such, since the persons who brought these infants or little ones to Christ, were without doubt *his followers*, or such as had an *high veneration* for him—they were *Jews*, not *heathens*," &c. All this may be very true, for any thing I know; but where do we learn that (*τῶν τοιούτων*) *of such*, has any the least reference (*τοῖς προσφεραῖν*) *to those who brought them*? The words are not, of the children *of such*, as brought them; but *of such* (*παιδίων*), *little children is the kingdom of God*; i. e. the kingdom of God includes such young subjects as these. Here is no distinguishing of children by the character of their parents. Nor does this passage afford the least warrant for baptizing them, but the contrary. They were not brought to be baptized. Jesus himself did not baptize them, for he baptized none, John iv. 2. Nor did he command his disciples to do it; nor would they have forbidden infants to have been brought unto him had they been accustomed to baptize such.—*The kingdom of God* here evidently means his *invisible* kingdom, for it is such as none can enter, but those who receive it as little children, ver. 15. or are *converted* and become as little children, Matth. xviii. 3. Whereas many enter his *visible* kingdom who



are not really converted, Matth. xxv. 1—13. Yet to this last only does baptism belong, for this good reason, because it is not administered by Christ himself, who knows whom he hath chosen, but by fallible men, who can judge only by outward appearance.

It is of little consequence whether we grant baptism to have come in place of circumcision or not, provided we keep clear the distinction between the *children of the flesh* and the *children of the promise*, which distinction runs through the whole New Testament, and is particularly stated Rom. ix. and Gal. iii. and iv. This distinction cuts down at once all the arguments from circumcision. With this scripture distinction in our eye, we may freely admit, that as circumcision belonged to all the *fleshly seed* of Abraham under the old covenant, who were known to be such by their natural birth; so does baptism belong to all the *spiritual seed* of Abraham under the new covenant, when they appear to be such by the confession of their faith in Christ.

Mr. Carter endeavours to confound this distinction; “Where (says he) does the Holy Ghost apply the term *carnal seed* to the infants of believers? Is not *carnal* always used to denote the character of adults who live according to the desire of the flesh, and of the mind? This distinction therefore, the carnal and spiritual seed of Christians, is totally without foundation.” p. 48, 51.—The term *carnal* is frequently applied to *things* as well as persons; see Rom. xv. 27. 1 Cor. ix. 11. 2 Cor. iii. 3. Heb. vii. 16. and ix. 10. When applied to adults, it generally marks something bad in their character or conduct, but not *always* to that extent he mentions; for it is applied to Christians, 1 Cor. iii. 1, 3, 4. But the expression he excepts to is *carnal seed*; and where does he find this used to denote the character



of adults in distinction from that of infants? Were there none of *believing* Abraham's children a carnal seed in their *infancy*? How then were they "the children of the flesh," Rom. ix. 8. "born after the flesh," Gal. iv. 23? But he has mistaken us altogether; for we do not divide the infant offspring of Christians into their *carnal* and spiritual seed. We affirm that, as the seed of Christians, they are *all carnal*, because in this respect Christians are only the fathers of their *flesh*, or carnal part, in distinction from God the father of spirits, Heb. xii. 9. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," or carnal, let it spring of whom it may, John iii. 6. Further, we affirm, that the infants of Christians are, in their first birth, "Shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin," Psal. li. 5. and are "by nature the children of wrath even as others," Eph. ii. 3. The *first state* even of the children of God is carnal, and this commences with their very existence, and continues till they are changed. In both these senses they may very properly be called their *carnal seed*. But it is quite improper to call the *believing* children of Christians their *spiritual seed*; for, as *believers*, they are the children of God, Gal. iii. 26—the seed of Abraham, ver. 29.—the children of Jerusalem which is from above, the free woman, chap. iv. 26, 31. And, in this respect, not the *children*, but *brethren* of their believing parents.—Indeed, if the parents are instrumental in begetting them to the faith, they may in that sense be called their children, as Timothy was Paul's son, 1 Tim. i. 2. and the Galatians his *little children*, Gal. iv. 19. But this relation is not peculiar to parent and child, nor can it take place in mere infancy; besides, the children may sometimes be instrumental in converting their parents.

Letter VI. Contains some testimonies from the ancients; but as he "cannot feel himself in the least moved by the authority of such ancients to believe that *immersion* was the practice of the apostles of Christ, who enjoined the churches to do all things decently," p. 17. he cannot with any good grace urge their authority upon us for *Infant Sprinkling*, contrary to the commission and uniform practice of the apostles, supposing there were any such authority to produce before the latter end of the second century, which I believe there is not. I shall therefore proceed to

Letter VII. Wherein he handles the Argument from the baptism of whole houses. In reply to the quotations from my pamphlet, he charges me with "*begging* the question, or taking for granted the point in debate," p. 72.

In answer to this charge I shall state the question, and see which of us has *begged* it. The question or point in debate, if I mistake not, is this, Whether there were any infants baptized in those houses? I denied there were—1. Because in all the accounts of those houses, there is not a word said of infants or of their baptism; for this I referred to the passages themselves.—2. Because it is affirmed of *all* that were baptized in those houses, that they *believed, rejoiced, &c.* This also I rested upon the authority of these accounts, which was the best I could produce. I know nothing, therefore, which I have *taken for granted*, except it be this, that infants *cannot* be said to *believe, rejoice, &c.* and for this I shall only appeal to common sense.—It might reasonably be expected that the Pædobaptists, however firmly persuaded of their favourite point upon other grounds, would candidly give up those houses as unserviceable to their cause; but instead of

this they, with much confidence, *beg* one question after another in every step of the argument.—1. They *beg* leave to assert that there were infants in those houses; and—2. They *beg* also to be excused from proving it, thinking they have sufficiently acquitted themselves when they put it upon us to *prove the negative*. Should we tell them there are many houses *without infants*, and that therefore their assertion is at best but *uncertain*—Should we come a little closer to the point, and remind them, that the scripture informs us *all* in those houses *heard the word* and *believed*, which infants were not capable of, and that therefore their assertion is evidently *false*; they will then—3. *Beg* to have it granted, that it was only the parent, not the house, that believed and rejoiced; or, if that will not do, that the word *ALL* signifies only the adult *part* of a house, and that the other part consisted of infants. Should we, for argument's sake, grant them the unscriptural supposition, that there were infants in those houses, they have still—4 To *beg* the question as to their baptism. How so? Is it not said expressly, that *ALL* in those houses were baptized? True; but they have already *begged* that the word *ALL* might signify only a *PART*, *i. e.* the *adult part* of a house, therefore it can conclude for the baptism of none else; so that to make out the baptism of these *imaginary* infants, they are obliged to reverse their former petition, and to *beg* they may be comprehended in the word *ALL*, from which they had before begged to exclude them. In short, when *all* in a house are said to *believe*, they restrict it to adults; but when *all* in the *same passage*, and in the *very same house*, are said to be *baptized*, they extend it to infants: Why? Because they *take it for granted* that there were infants in those houses,

and that they were proper subjects of baptism, which is *the very point in debate*. I am afraid there is something worse than *begging the question* in this manner of arguing. It looks too like *handling the word of God deceitfully*. Mr. Carter's question, (p. 72) must be answered by him and his friends—we have nothing to do with it. I shall put it with a very little variation, and let him answer it if he can: “By what rules of just and fair interpretation can” the Pœdobaptists “prove that the same *mode of expression* which” they explain in *one sense*, when used of a house *believing and rejoicing*, “must be understood in a *different point of view*, when applied” to the *same* house *baptized*? If in the *former*” case “it can be referred only to” *adults*, “why, in the *latter*, must it be stretched any farther?”

I am,

Dear Sir,

Yours, with all due respect

*Edinburgh,*  
*March 27, 1783.*



A

LETTER TO A CORRESPONDENT;

SHEWING

*That all the Arguments for Infant-Baptism are rendered null by Pædobaptists themselves; and that there can be no positive divine institution without EXPRESS SCRIPTURE PRECEPT OR EXAMPLE.*

SIR,

**THOUGH** you admit that the Scriptures clearly support our sentiments respecting the baptism of believers, as it is evident that those who were at first baptized must have been adult proselytes from Judaism or heathenism to the Christian faith; yet still it is your opinion, that the baptism of their infants, though not expressly mentioned, is a thing very probable: and you think that the arguments which have been advanced for infant-baptism, by such a vast number of the most judicious, learned, and pious writers, if they do not altogether convince us, should at least make us less confident in our opposition to that practice.

I am not in the least disposed to dispute either the learning or piety of those who have appeared as advocates for infant-baptism; and could I believe that it is a question of such an intricate nature as to require profound learning or distinguished abilities to determine it, I should certainly be very diffident of my own judgment. But if infant-baptism be really a positive institution of Christ, it can require no such singular qualifications to discern it; and if it is not, then all the learning and reasoning in the world, however ingenious, can never convert it into one.

It is very remarkable, that though Pædobaptists of all denominations agree in the general conclusion, viz. that infants ought to be baptized, or, at least, that there is no harm in it; yet they are far from being agreed as to the premises from whence they infer that conclusion; for there is scarcely an argument which has been urged by any of them in support of it, but what has been contradicted by others of them, or considered as inconclusive and foreign to the point: if you doubt the truth of this you may attend to the following particulars.

1. The Pædobaptists differ widely among themselves about the grounds of the *right* which infants have to baptism. Some found it upon the universality of divine grace: others, upon the commission to disciple all nations. But many reject these grounds, and place it upon the law of circumcision, which they think warrants the baptism of the infant seed of New Testament believers. Others doubt this, and affirm that it comes in place, or is rather a continuation of Jewish proselyte baptism; while others deny that there was any such baptism previous to the Christian æra. Some ground it upon the entail of the covenant of grace on the natural seed of believers, at least during their infancy, and which gives them a right to baptism as being born holy and members of the true church for which Christ gave himself. Others deny this, and affirm, that it is by baptism they are brought into the bond of the covenant of grace, and constituted members of the true church.—Some place the right of infants to baptism on the engagement of a surety or sponsor, and many on the faith of the immediate parents, or, if these last happen to be ungodly, on the piety of their more remote ancestors, which they think conveys the right to

several succeeding generations; but how far this extends they are not yet agreed. Others deny any right derived from parents or ancestors, and place it on the faith and consent of the church, and some even on the authority of the Christian magistrate over his subjects. There are numbers who ground it on the supposed faith of the infant itself, which they presume it possesses in the seed, though not in the fruit; and Luther owns, "that little children should not be baptized at all, if it be true that in baptism they do not believe." Those who adopt this opinion seem to give up every other ground for infant-baptism, for they admit that nothing solid can be replied to the Baptists, without maintaining either that infants have faith before baptism, or that, in baptism, they are regenerated and believe. In short, the various grounds upon which the right of infants to baptism has been placed, are not only contradictory in their own nature, but have actually been contradicted by Pœdobaptists themselves, one class of them overturning the hypothesis of another.

II. The Pœdobaptists are not agreed as to the *sense of the scripture passages* from which infant-baptism is inferred, nor as to the justness of the inferences or conclusions drawn from them. I shall take notice of those passages on which the main stress is laid.

Gen. xvii. 7. "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Many Pœdobaptists, not understanding that this covenant with Abraham had a twofold sense; one literal and temporal, relating to his natural seed; the other spiritual and eternal, respecting his spiritual seed, have applied



it indiscriminately to the natural seed of New Testament believers. But others of them admit this distinction, and maintain, that, so far as this was a promise of spiritual blessings, it did not respect the natural seed of Abraham as such, but only his spiritual seed, *by faith*; that in this view only does it include believing Gentiles, Gal. iii. 26, 28, 29. but not the natural seed, of any as such, Matth. iii. 9. Rom. ix. 8. 2 Cor. v. 16, 17. See Zanchius, *De nat. Dei*, L. iv. c. v. § 5. Mr. Baxter's *Disputat. of right to Sacram.* p. 114, 115. Assem. of Divines' Annotat. on Rom. ix. 8. Beza's Annotat. on Gal. iv. 24. Venema, *Dissertat. Sacrae*, L. ii. c. ix. L. iii. c. ii. Mr. Williams's Notes on Morrice's Social Religion, p. 312—317.

Gen. xvii. 12. "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations," &c. From this command to circumcise the infant male seed of Abraham, it is commonly argued, that the natural seed of believers should be baptized in infancy. But many Pædobaptists do not consider this argument as conclusive: Lord BROOKE says, "The analogy which baptism now hath with circumcision in the old law, is a fine rhetorical argument to illustrate a point well proved before; but I somewhat doubt whether it be proof enough for that which some would prove by it; since besides the vast differences in the ordinances, the persons to be circumcised are stated by a positive law so express, that it leaves no place for scruple. But it is far otherwise in baptism, where all the designation of persons fit to be partakers, for aught I know, is only *such as believe*. For this is the qualification that, with exactest search, I find the scripture requires in persons to be baptized; and this it seems to require in all such persons. Now,



how infants can be said to believe, I am not yet fully resolved." *Discourse of Epis.* Sect. ii. chap. vii. p. 97. VENEMA, having observed that it is a received hypothesis that baptism succeeded in the place of circumcision, says, " But what then ? Must I therefore allow, or does it thence follow, that the design and the end of baptism, and of circumcision, were the same ? Certainly by no means. For according to the different nature of the economies, there ought to be a different aspect of the sacraments, and a different end.—Circumcision, according to a twofold covenant, internal and external, which then existed, had likewise a twofold aspect, spiritual and carnal. The former referred to the internal covenant of grace; the latter to a legal, typical, and external covenant. That was concerned in sealing *the righteousness of faith*, as the apostle asserts (Rom. iv. 11.); this in the external prerogatives of Judaism, and in confirming *external benefits*. That was peculiar to the *believing Israelites*; this was common to the *whole people*.—This twofold and different aspect of circumcision being supposed and admitted, the whole question will be, Whether baptism answers to both, or only to one of those different appearances ? Whether it succeeds to circumcision absolutely and in all respects, or in a restricted sense, and in some only ? Which controversy cannot be determined, but from a comparison of both economies, a contemplation on the nature of each sacrament, and indeed *the clear doctrine of scripture*." And having observed, that the scripture no where affirms that baptism holds the place of circumcision, and that Paul in Col. ii. 11, 12. only asserts that baptism answers to *spiritual* circumcision, he proceeds thus; " and seeing I perceive none [no reason] pro-

duced for a perfect similitude, it is my intention to establish an imperfect likeness, in order to make it appear that baptism succeeded circumcision, not according to an external, but only an internal and mystical consideration. The genius of the new economy affords the first and the clearest reason; seeing a sacrament of it cannot be foreign from its nature. Now that is spiritual, abhorrent of an external covenant, as I have endeavoured to demonstrate; wherefore it answers only to the spiritual part of the old economy." From these considerations he concludes, that "to settle the external aspect and end of baptism, a comparison of it with circumcision avails nothing at all." He also observes, that "our sacraments do not belong to any external covenant, as under the former dispensations; but to the internal covenant of grace: which positive institutes no one can rightly or lawfully use, besides a *true believer*, who is internally a covenantee." *Dissertat. Sacræ*. L. ii. c. xv. See also Dr. ERSKINE'S *Theolog. Dissertat.* p. 78, 79, 80.

Matth. xxviii. 19. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" &c. Many of the Pœdobaptists contend that infants are included in this commission; that the word *μαθητευσατε*, signifies to *make disciples*, and that infants are to be made disciples by baptism, and to be taught afterwards. But a great many of the most learned and judicious Pœdobaptist writers reprobate this gloss; I shall instance only in three of them. Mr. BAXTER says, "As for those that say they are discipled by baptizing, and not before baptizing, they speak not the sense of that text; nor that which is true or rational, if they mean it absolutely as so spoken; else why should one be baptized

more than another?—This is not like some occasional historical mention of baptism, but it is the very commission of Christ to his apostles for preaching and baptizing, and purposely expresseth their several works, in their several places and order. Their first task is by teaching to make disciples, which are by Mark called *believers*: The second work is to baptize them, whereto is annexed the promise of their salvation: The third work is to teach them all other things which are afterwards to be learned in the school of Christ. To condemn this order, is to renounce all rules of order; for where can we expect to find it if not here? I profess my conscience is fully satisfied from this text, that it is one sort of faith, even saving, that must go before baptism, and the profession whereof the minister must expect.” *Disputat. of Right to Sacr.* p. 91, 149, 150.

Dr. RIDGLEY, having cited the words of the commission, says, “ I am sensible that some who have defended infant-baptism, or rather attempted to answer an objection taken from this and such like scriptures against it, have endeavoured to prove that the Greek word signifies to *make* persons *disciples*—and therefore they suppose that we are made disciples by baptism, and afterwards to be taught to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded.—But I cannot think this sense of the word so defensible or agreeable to the design of our Saviour, as that of our translation, *viz. Go teach all nations*; which agrees with the words of the other Evangelist, *Go preach the gospel to every creature*. And besides, while we have recourse to this sense to defend infant-baptism, we do not rightly consider, that this cannot well be applied to adult baptism, which the apostles were first to



practise : for it cannot be said concerning the heathen, that they are first to be taken under Christ's care by baptism, and then instructed in the doctrines of the gospel by his ministers." *Body of Div. Quest.* 166.

Dr. WHITBY thus comments upon this passage, "*Teach all nations.* Μαθητεύειν here is *to preach the gospel to all nations*, and to engage them to believe it in order to their profession of that faith by baptism; as seems apparent.—1. From the parallel commission, *Mark xvi. 15. Go preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth*, and is baptized, shall be saved.—2. From the scripture notion of a *disciple*, that being still the same as a *believer*.—If here it should be said, that I yield too much to the Antipoedobaptists—I desire any one to tell me how the apostles could, μαθητεύειν, *make a disciple* of an heathen, or unbelieving Jew, without being μαθηται, or *teachers* of them? whether they were not sent to preach to those that could hear, and to teach them to whom they preached, that *Jesus was the Christ*, and only to baptize them when they did believe this?" &c.

Matth. xix. 14. "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me : for of such is the kingdom of God." Much use has been made of this passage in support of infant-baptism; but several Poedobaptist writers admit, that it is of little or no service to the cause. Mr. POOLE'S Continuator on the place give this caution, "We must take heed we do not found infant-baptism upon the example of Christ in this text; for it is certain that he did not baptize these children. Mark only saith, He took them into his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them." Dr. DODDRIDGE says, "I acknowledge these words of themselves will not prove infant-baptism to



be an institution of Christ." *Note* on the place. Dr. WHITBY, having attempted to shew that these words are fitly used at the celebration of infant-baptism, adds, " But, say the Antipædobaptists, Christ neither did baptize them, nor command the apostles to do it.

*Ans.* That is not to be wondered at, if we consider that—Christian baptism was not yet instituted; and that the baptism then used by John and Christ's disciples, was only the baptism of repentance, and faith in the Messiah, which was for to come, Acts xix. 4; of both which infants were incapable." *Annotat.* on the place. With this Mr. BURKITT's note agrees almost verbatim. But here a question occurs, How are infants more capable of Christian baptism than they were of the baptism of John? Is it because Christian baptism requires neither *faith* nor *repentance* as that did? Or are infants mentioned as subjects of the one any more than of the other?

Acts ii. 39. " The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." These words have also been frequently urged in favour of infant-baptism; but many learned Pædobaptists deny that they have any relation to that subject. Thus Dr. HAMMOND says, " If any have made use of that very inconcludent argument, [*viz.* from Acts ii. 39,] I have nothing to say in defence of them—the word *children* there is really the posterity of the Jews, and not peculiarly their infant children." *Works*, vol. i. p. 490. LIMBORCH, having shewn that the apostle by τέκνα did not mean infants, but children or posterity, concludes thus, " Whence it appears, that the argument which is very commonly taken from this passage for the baptism of infants, is of no force, and good for nothing;

because it entirely departs from the design of Peter. It is necessary, therefore, that Pœdobaptism should be supported by other arguments." *Comment. in loc.* Dr. WHITBY on the place says, "These words will not prove a right of infants to receive baptism. The promise here being that only of the Holy Ghost, mentioned ver. 16, 17, 18. and so relating only to the times of the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost, and to those persons who by age were made capable of these extraordinary gifts."

Acts xvi. 15. "When she was baptized and her household."—Ver. 33. "And was baptized, he and all his, straightway."—1 Cor. i. 16. "I baptized also the household of Stephanas." As many of the Pœdobaptists take it for granted that there were infants in those households, so they conclude that they were baptized: But here again their Pœdobaptist brethren consider this argument as altogether uncertain. As to the household of Lydia, Dr. WHITBY paraphrases the passage thus, "And when she, and those of her household, were instructed in the Christian faith, and in the nature of the baptism required by it, she was baptized, and her household." LIMBORCH on the place says, "Whether any infants were in her house is uncertain. An undoubted argument, therefore, cannot be drawn from this instance, by which it may be demonstrated that infants were baptized by the apostles.—There might be [little] children in these families; yet the Holy Spirit furnishes me with no solid argument whereby I can demonstrate it—it does not expressly say there were any children in them: And though this should be granted, yet we are not informed that they were baptized together with their parents; on the contrary, all those who were baptized

are said to *give thanks to God*, which children could never do." Of the Jailer and his house it is said, *He rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house*, Acts xvi. 34. On which Mr. HENRY observes, "There was none in his house that refused to be baptized, and so made a jar in the harmony; but they were unanimous in embracing the gospel, which added much to the joy." With respect to the household of Stephanas, Dr. HAMMOND says, "I think it unreasonable that the apostle's bare mention of baptizing his household should be thought competent to conclude that infants were baptized by him, when it is uncertain whether there were any such at all in his house," *Works*, vol. i. p. 494. Indeed it appears clear there were none such in his house; for the apostle in the same epistle says, "Ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints," 1 Cor. xvi. 15. On which place Dr. DODDRIDGE remarks, "This seems to imply, that it was the generous care of the whole family to assist their fellow Christians; so that there was not a member of it which did not do its part."

1 Cor. vii. 14. "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." This text is strongly urged by many as a decisive proof of infant-baptism; but there are also many learned and judicious Pædobaptist writers who differ from them, both as to the sanctification of the unbelieving parent, and the consequent holiness of the children, and deny that it has any relation to baptism. In opposition to that external covenant holiness which many plead for, VEL-



THUYSIUS says, "Some think, by that holiness, mentioned in 1 Cor. vii. 14. is to be understood such an external holiness as was possessed by an Israelite and a Jew, even though his life made it appear that he was not a true Israelite, *whose praise is not of men, but of God*. Now those who are of this opinion suppose, that there is a kind of external covenant under the gospel; on account of which covenant some are called *holy*, though nothing appears in their lives to prove them real saints. But I see no intimation of this external covenant in the whole gospel." *Opera*. Tom. 1. p. 801. To the same purpose VITRINGA writes, "We would have it observed, the apostle does not mean, that all the children of believers and saints are truly partakers of the Holy Spirit, and by him ingrafted into the body of the church; for there is no promise of this prerogative made to believing parents; nay, rather, the events of every day teach the contrary—[therefore] the generality of our divines recur to an *external holiness*, which has its original from an external covenant. So that the children of believers are holy, because being separated from the world, they live and are educated in the communion of the external church. Like as the Israelites in former times, being chosen out of the other nations of the world, are called a *holy nation*, Exod. xix. 6. though a very great part of them was impure; and their children are denominated a *holy seed*, Ezra ix. 2. comp. with Neh. ix. 2.—But this is inconsistent with the clear doctrine of the divine word, and absolutely contrary to the genius of the new covenant.—So far from an external holiness of this kind having any place under the New Testament, that, on the contrary, this is the prerogative of the New Testament or Covenant, that no one belongs to it, except he



be truly sanctified: no one is called holy, except he be truly considered as internally holy; and in this consists the difference between the Old and the New Covenant—that this is entirely spiritual, entirely internal.”—But after all we must remember, that VITRINGA was a Pœdobaptist, and therefore, though he denies that there is any *external covenant holiness* under the New Testament; nay, though he denies that the apostle means that all the children of believers are truly holy as being *partakers of the Holy Spirit*, or that there is any *promise* of this prerogative made to believing parents; yet he adds, “The infants of believing parents are therefore called *holy*, because we justly *presume*, that they are sanctified by the Holy Spirit in their parents. For seeing God has conferred his grace on the parents, or on one of the parents, by a judgment of charity we *presume*, that he will afford the same grace to the infants as long as the contrary is not manifest to us.” *Observat. Sac. L. ii. c. vi. § 25, 26, 27, 28.*—“We justly *presume*—by a judgment of charity we *presume*.”—Presume what? “That infants are sanctified by the Holy Ghost in their parents.” Does the apostle say so? No. Is there any promise to that effect? No. Then to *presume* it, and to act upon it, is indeed *presumption, mere presumption*, and nothing else.

As to the *sanctification* of the unbelieving parent, and the consequent *holiness* or *cleanness* of the children, many of the Pœdobaptists agree with our view of both. Take the following for a specimen; “The apostle does not mean the sanctification of a married person, by which he becomes truly righteous and holy; but that by which the use of marriage may be honourably enjoyed.” JUSTINIANUS: apud Chamierum, *Panstrat.*

Tom. iv. l. v. c. x. § 47.—“The sanctification intended relates to marriage.” SALMERO. *Ibid.*—“The children are called *holy* in a civil sense; that is, legitimate, and not spurious.—As if Paul had said, If your marriage were unlawful, your children would be illegitimate. But the former is not a fact; therefore not the latter.” SUARES and VASQUES, *Ibid.*—“*Hath been sanctified*; that is, legitimated, so that their marriage is lawful. This the apostle proves from the natural effect. For if the unbelieving husband be not sanctified, *i. e.* legitimated, by the wife; and if the unbelieving wife be not sanctified or legitimated by the husband, *your children are unclean*; that is, they were born of an unlawful marriage; rather of an illicit commerce. *But now are they holy*; that is, *legitimate*, not bastards, or born of unchastity.” DIETERICUS; apud Wolfium, *Curæ*, in loc.—“We attribute this sanctification, that is cleanness, not to the *faith* of the believing yokefellow, but to the *marriage*, by reason of the appointment of God; with HIEROME, who saith, *because by God's appointment marriage is holy*; and AMBROSE, who hath it thus, *the children are holy, because they are born of lawful marriage*.—Nor is any other holiness or cleanness of children meddled with, than that which agrees also to unbelieving parents; for to them no other agrees, than that which is by lawful marriage.” *Musculus*.—“The unbeliever is said to be sanctified by marriage with the believer; not as to the *person*, which is not sanctified, except by faith; but as to use, and conjugal intercourse.—Paul here treats concerning a mutual participation of such holiness as depends upon conjugal custom, as CHRYSOSTOM teaches; a holiness which the believing and unbelieving partner have in common between them-

selves. Whence it follows, that these things have been rashly and violently applied by Calvin, Beza, Paræus, and others, to a natural or original holiness of children born of believers." CALOVIVS' *Biblica Illustrata*. Many other Pœdobaptist writers agree in this sense of the passage. Indeed I know of no Scripture text which has been adduced to prove infant-baptism, which many of the most judicious Pœdobaptists themselves have not considered either as entirely foreign to the point, or at least very doubtful. \*

III. Those who practise infant-baptism differ much from each other in their opinion as to what *benefit* infants derive from their being baptized. The Romish and Greek churches hold it to be necessary to their salvation. Protestants in general deny this, though many of them lean to that side.—The church of England affirms, that by it they are made the members of Christ, the children of God, and the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven: others deny that baptism *makes* them such, but only seals and confirms these blessings to them.—Some maintain that it initiates them into the true invisible church; others, into the visible church; while many insist that they are naturally members of the visible church by being born within the pale of it, and that their baptism is only an acknowledgment of this.—Many consider baptism as sealing to infants the benefits of an external covenant, which they think is made with believers respecting their offspring, answerable to the covenant which God made with Abraham respecting his natural seed, though they are not

\* Several of the foregoing quotations from foreign Pœdobaptist writers, I have selected from Mr. BOOTH'S *Pœdobaptism Examined*. 2d edit. a book which I recommend to your perusal.



agreed as to the nature of these benefits : but others deny that any such covenant exists under the gospel. VITRINGA says, " The sacraments of the New Covenant are of such a nature, as to seal nothing but what is spiritual ; nor are they of ANY ADVANTAGE, except with regard to those who really believe in Jesus Christ."

Many of them are quite undetermined as to the efficacy and usefulness of infant-baptism. Mr. Booth has produced three of their celebrated writers who acknowledge this. WITSIUS says, " The question relating to the *efficacy* and *usefulness* of Christian baptism, in reference to the elect infants of parents who are in the covenant, is peculiarly arduous and obstruse ; and as of old, so very lately, it is embarrassed by the subtilty of curious disputes." *Miscel. Sac.* Tom. ii. exercit. xix. § i. Mr. JONATHAN EDWARDS speaks to the same purpose, " God's method of dealing with such infants as are regularly dedicated to him in baptism, is a matter liable to great disputes and many controversies." *Inquiry into Qualificat. for Commun.* Appendix, p. 13. So also SAURIN ; " Does an infant participate in the blessings of a covenant, which he may perhaps reject when he comes to the age of reason ? Is baptism useless, then, till such as have received it shall perform the vows that have been made for them ? Why do not we wait then till that time before it be administered ? We do not pretend that these difficulties are insurmountable ; but we think that means more consistent than those which are commonly employed should be offered." *Abrege de la Theologie*, p. 202. Nay, some of them do not view infant-baptism as of any benefit at all. They consider it not as directly implying that the infants themselves have any interest



in it, or in the thing signified by it; but as part of the parent's own profession of Christianity.

Thus it appears that the Pædobaptists are not agreed among themselves as to the *grounds* of the right which infants have to baptism; nor as to the *sense* of the Scripture passages commonly alleged in support of it; nor as to the *benefit* which infants derive from it.

IV. The Pædobaptists universally admit, that there is no express *precept* nor plain *precedent* for infant-baptism in all the word of God. But to admit this, (and admit it they must) is, in fact, to give up the cause. Baptism is confessedly not a *moral* but *positive* institution; that is, it is not founded in the nature of things, like moral precepts, but depends entirely on the authority and revealed will of the Institutor. Now, if infant-baptism have neither scripture precept nor example to support it, it can have no existence as a divine institution. But it may be proper to explain more fully the difference between *moral* and *positive* precepts, which I shall do nearly in the words of Pædobaptist writers.

Moral duties are founded not merely in external commands, but in the nature and reason of things. To love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, are duties arising from the character of God, and our relation to him and one another, and so right and fit in their own nature antecedently to any external command. But positive institutions are founded solely in the will of the Institutor. To eat of the tree in the midst of the garden was in itself altogether indifferent, till it became sinful by the Divine prohibition. So circumcision, and the various rituals of the Mosaic law, had no foundation in the nature of things, but became

duties merely by positive institution. Yet we are not to consider positive institutions as mere *arbitrary* impositions; for God appoints nothing but for some wise reason, and for some good end; but then it is not the *reason* or *end* but the *authority* which makes the institution; and therefore though we should not understand the reason of this or that appointment, yet if we see the command, we must obey.

Again, moral doctrines and duties may be deduced and inferred from others of a moral nature, and all of them from their first principles. Thus love is the principle required in the moral law, and from this we may justly infer a prohibition from working any ill to our neighbour, as being contrary to the nature of love, (Rom. xiii. 10.) and also a command to do him all the good that properly lies in our power, for that is nothing but the natural and practical exercise of love. So that a genuine inference from a moral principle, and relating to things of a moral nature, has all the certainty of the principle itself. But with regard to positive institutions the case is quite different: For as they depend wholly upon the will of God, so they cannot be deduced or inferred from any thing known to us, abstract from the express declaration of his will. Such laws admit of no commutation, mutilation, or alteration by human authority; because in them we see nothing beyond the words of the law, and the first meaning, and the named instance. It is that *in individuo* which God appoints, fixing it so and *no more*, and *no less*, and *no otherwise*: For when the will of the Lawgiver is *all the reason*, the first instance of the law is *all the measures*, and there can be no product but what is just set down. No parity of reason can infer any thing else; because there is no reason known

to us but the will of God, to which nothing can be equal; which will being actually limited to this specification, this manner, this institution, whatever comes besides, has no foundation in the will of the Lawgiver, and therefore can have no warrant or authority. It is plain therefore, that as *moral duties* may be deduced from moral principles and the reason of things, it is not necessary that every duty of this nature in all its supposeable modes, occasions, objects, and circumstances, should be expressly stated and particularly specified, for that would be endless: But with respect to *positive institutions*, as these depend entirely on the will of the Institutor, and cannot be deduced from any thing else, so they can have no existence but by the *express declaration* of his will in their appointment, without which they cannot be said to be instituted, and so there can be no obligation to observe them.

Moral duties are of *perpetual obligation*, because founded in the nature of things, or the essential and unalterable distinction between right and wrong: But positive institutions, being appointed only for a *limited time*, their obligation ceases when that time has expired. Thus circumcision and the rituals of the old law were set aside at the end of the Jewish dispensation; and so Baptism and the Lord's Supper will cease when Christ shall come again. But here it must be observed that our *obligations* to obey all God's commands, whether moral or positive, are absolute and indispensable; and that commands, merely positive, admitted to be from Him, lay us under a *moral* obligation to obey them, an obligation *moral* in the strictest and most proper sense. Surely obedience to God's command is a moral excellence, though the instances of that obedience may lie in positive rites. A disposition



to obey divine orders, either positive or moral, is part of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. We may be saved without a sacrament, but we cannot be saved without a disposition to obey God's authority wherever we see it. Positive precepts are the greatest and most perfect trial of obedience, because in them the mere authority and will of the Legislator is the sole ground of the obligation, and nothing in the nature of the things themselves; and therefore they are the greatest trial of any person's respect to that authority and will. Whatever difference there is between moral and positive precepts, and however excellent the former are in themselves in comparison with the latter, the *obligation* is the same in both, viz. the command of God.

We shall now apply these observations to the subject in hand. The Pœdobaptists admit that baptism is a *positive* institution.—They also admit (and I know none of them who deny) that a positive institution *depends solely on the will of God* the Institutor; and so cannot be deduced or inferred from any thing known to us, besides the express declaration of his will concerning it.—Further, they are obliged to admit, that there is no *express precept* or *example* in all the word of God for infant-baptism.

Now, by these concessions they entirely, though undesignedly, give up the cause of infant-baptism; for a positive institution for which there is neither express precept nor example, is an absolute contradiction, as no positive institution can have any existence but by the express declaration of the will of the Institutor, which is its very institution; nor can we know any thing about it unless it be expressly recorded or exemplified in the holy scriptures.



Still, however, it is maintained, that though there is no express scripture precept or example for the baptism of infants, there are many other considerations from which it may be deduced or inferred. This is the common mistake in which all the Pœdobaptists unite, and so depart from the true nature of the subject in question, which is a positive rite, not deducible from any principle known to us, but depending entirely for its being, and all that relates to it, on the will of God; consequently, not the subject of inference, but of express positive institution. Were it a natural or moral duty, it might be fairly argued from general principles, moral considerations, analogy, expediency, fitness or utility, because the known nature and relation of things furnish the proper *data*: Nay, a duty of this nature may be fairly inferred from many texts of scripture where it is not particularly mentioned, nor perhaps has entered into the thoughts of the inspired writers when penning these texts: But as to baptism the case is quite different, it being a particular ritual institution which derives its whole being and authority from a positive law respecting itself, and therefore can be deduced from no other principle whatever. Since therefore the Pœdobaptists cannot produce a plain scripture precept or precedent for the baptism of infants, all their arguments in favour of it are quite inapplicable and to no purpose.

Many Pœdobaptist writers confess, that “the scripture does not *clearly determine* the baptism of infants”—“that it is *so dark* in the scriptures, that the controversy is become *so hard*, as we find it”—“that it is not so clearly delivered, but that it admits of a dispute which has *considerable perplexities* in it. Therefore some of them wish to shift the state of the question,

and turn the argument upon another hinge. Thus VITRINGA; "He, in my opinion, that would argue prudently against the Anabaptists, should not state the point in controversy thus; Whether infants, born of Christian parents, *ought necessarily* to be Baptized? but, whether it be *lawful*, according to the Christian discipline, to baptize them? Or, what *evil* is there in the ceremony of baptizing infants?" *Observat. Sac.* Tom. 1. L. ii. c. vii. § 9. Thus also an anonymous author, "In the controversy about infant-baptism, the enquiry ought not to be, Whether Christ hath *commanded* infants to be baptized? but, whether he hath *excluded* them from baptism?" *Cases to Recover Dissenters*, Vol. ii. p. 405.

This *prudent* manner of arguing, by shifting the enquiry from a command or example to a prohibition, demonstrates in the clearest manner to what a sad pinch the more thinking part of the Pædobaptists are reduced. To maintain the baptism of infants as being either *commanded* or *exemplified* in scripture, is to place it upon a ground which they find to be altogether untenable; but they think that if infants are not *excluded* from it by an express prohibition, there can be no *evil* in it, *i. e.* it must be a thing perfectly harmless and indifferent! And it will be granted, that if they do not intend it as a divine institution, there can be no *evil* in bathing or washing infants as often as there is occasion for it, and as they are not *excluded* from this, it is perfectly *lawful*. But if they perform it as a religious act of divine worship, and administer it in the sacred name of the Divine Three, then it involves in it a complication of evils. It is a profane abuse of the adorable name of the Trinity, and a misapplication of the outward sign: It supersedes, or sets aside, the

baptism of believers which Christ hath instituted, and so makes the commandment of God of none effect, by substituting a human tradition in its place, Mat. xv. 3, 6. And as it is founded upon the negative ground of its not being particularly and expressly prohibited, it establishes a principle that will justify all manner of superstition and will worship, which the Lord expressly condemns and rejects, saying, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," ver. 9. see also Col. ii. 20, 22, 23.

It is said that infants are not *excluded* from baptism: But does not our Lord commission his apostles to baptize persons of a certain description, viz. those whom they should *teach* or *make disciples* by the preaching of the gospel? and is not the subject of that ordinance plainly described to be, *he that believeth*? This certainly excludes infants who cannot be taught or believe, and there was no necessity that he should further exclude them by a particular *express* prohibition; for when the subjects of a positive ordinance are described, all who fall not under that description are of course excluded.

Thus you may see, that the arguments in favour of infant-baptism have no tendency to make us less confident in our opposition to it. The Pædobaptists themselves destroy the force of one anothers arguments; for while they hold by one general conclusion, they differ as to every part of the premises whence it should be drawn.

I am,

Your, &c.



# BAPTISM

MUST PRECEDE

## VISIBLE CHURCH-FELLOWSHIP.

*In a Letter to a Friend.*

SIR,

WHILE you seem to admit, that the scripture warrants the baptism of none but believers, you cannot be reconciled to our making it a term of communion. Your words are: " But granting your view of baptism to be perfectly agreeable to the original institution, yet still I think you lay an undue stress upon that ordinance when you make it a term of communion. As it must be admitted that there are many sincere Christians who are differently minded from you on that subject, I cannot help thinking, that your refusing communion to such, merely on that account, is contrary to charity, and making a positive institution, or external rite, of as much importance as moral precepts, or the faith itself, wherein all true Christians are one, whereby it becomes an occasion of dividing the real children of God."

It is very surprising, that while you acknowledge baptism to be an ordinance of Christ, and even suppose that we observe it agreeably to his institution, you should yet object to us for refusing communion to such as, upon this supposition, are entirely without baptism, and have substituted a human invention in its place. I must be so free as to tell you, that this objection argues no great reverence for Christ's authority, or acquaintance either with the nature of true charity or



church-communion; but proceeds at bottom from an opinion, that the institutions of Christ are not absolutely binding, but may be sacrificed to our good opinion of men. It is very remarkable, that in proportion as that kind of charity you plead for bulks in your eye, in the same proportion does the importance and obligation of Christ's institutions sink in your esteem; hence you distinguish his precepts into *moral* and *positive*, as if the latter sort were not so much to be regarded as the former, nor his authority the same in both; and you speak of baptism in particular in such diminutive terms, as too plainly indicate that the authority of its Institutor has not its proper weight upon your conscience. Was it not the transgression of a *positive* law which introduced sin and death into the world? You may approve of *moral* precepts upon the principles of pure Deism, as perceiving them founded in nature and reason; but you cannot be influenced to this by Christ's authority, while you make light of his *positive* institutions, in which that authority appears more simple and conspicuous. We hold it as a fixed principle, that there can be no real Christianity without charity; but at the same time we are fully persuaded, that true charity must ever consist with a strict and conscientious adherence to all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded, and that no true Christian communion can take place upon the avowed principle, that one of the least of his laws should be dispensed with in favour of any, however serious they may appear, and however much cause we may have to esteem them on other accounts; for we can never be so certain of the Christianity of such as refuse to submit to Christ's ordinances, after they have been set before them, as we are of the ordinances

themselves, and of the indispensable obligation that lies upon all Christians to observe them. We admit, that there is but one faith essential to salvation, viz. That Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, that he was delivered for the offences and raised again for the justification of sinners,\* and that whosoever believeth this shall be saved:† But we think it no disparagement of this one faith to maintain, that there is also one baptism which corresponds with it,‡ and which, by the will of its Institutor, is inseparably connected, at least, with the scriptural confession of that faith,§ and so essentially necessary to the visible communion of saints. Besides these general hints, we offer the following reasons for holding believers-baptism as a term of visible communion.

1. Baptism is of indispensable obligation upon all Christians who can possibly obtain it, because Christ hath commanded it, and because he had sufficient power and authority to do so.

(1.) That Christ hath instituted baptism admits of no doubt; for he says, “Go teach all nations, baptizing them;”|| which is not only a command to his apostles *to baptize*, but to those whom they made disciples *to be baptized*;¶ for how could the apostles administer baptism, if none were obliged to receive it? The same command we have in Mark xvi. 16. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.” The obligation to be *baptized* is the same here with the obligation to *believe* the gospel; for it is

\* John xx. 31.—Rom. iv. 24, 25. † Rom. x. 9.

‡ Eph. iv. 5. § Mark xvi. 16. ¶ Mat. xxviii. 19.

¶ See Acts ii. 38. x. 48. and xxii. 16.

not simply said, "he that believeth," but "he that believeth, and is baptized;" so that whatever difference there is between these two in other respects, there is none in point of obligation. It can admit of no doubt that our Lord means baptism in *water*; for so his inspired apostles understood him, as appears from their practice, Acts viii. 38. how else could the forbidding of water be a withstanding of God? \* This command is not limited to any particular nation; for he bids them "teach *all nations*, baptizing them." Nor is it confined to the apostolic age; for he promises to be with his disciples in observing it, "always, even unto the *end of the world*." †

(2.) That Christ had sufficient power and authority to institute baptism and every other ordinance of the gospel, and an indisputable right to our obedience, cannot possibly be denied by any Christian. The Father declares him to be his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased, and commands us to hear him. ‡ He hath loved the Son, and given all things into his hand; § he hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church; || and upon this supreme power and authority with which he is vested, he grounds the commission to disciple and baptize; "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, THEREFORE, disciple all nations, baptizing them," ¶ &c. To dispute Christ's power to make laws, or his rightful title and claim to our obedience, is in fact to deny that he is the Christ, and to renounce Christianity altogether. His having *all power* in heaven and in earth, excludes not only all rival, but

\* Acts x. 47. and xi. 17. † Matth. xxviii. 20. ‡ chap. xvii. 5.

§ John iii. 35. || Eph. i. 22, 23. ¶ Matth. xxviii. 18, 19.



conjunct authority, either in angels or men, to set aside, dispense with, alter, or add to his laws, he being the alone Sovereign and sole Lawgiver of his church. Accordingly the latter part of the commission runs thus: "Teaching them" (*i. e.* the baptized disciples) "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."\* They were to teach them to observe only what *he had commanded*; and not their own inventions, or the traditions and commandments of men;†—to teach them *all things* whatsoever he had commanded, without keeping back, making light of, or dispensing with any of the least of his commandments.‡ Now if Christ has instituted baptism as a standing ordinance to the end of the world, if he had sufficient power and authority to do so, and if neither angels nor men have any right to dispense with, or alter his institutions, then the baptism of believers must be of indispensable obligation, and so essentially necessary to visible church communion.

II. The *order* in which baptism stands in the commission, proves it to be an indispensable pre-requisite to church communion. It comes immediately after being *made disciples* by preaching the gospel to them, and before they are *taught to observe* all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded. The supreme Lawgiver has expressly enjoined—first, to *make disciples*—then, immediately to *baptize* the disciples—lastly, to *teach the baptized disciples to observe*, keep, or obey his laws or institutions. It must be admitted, that church-fellowship, and the Lord's Supper, fall under the last head; and if so, then according to the order of

\* Matth. xxviii. 20.      † chap. xv. 4, 5, 6.—Col. ii. 8.

‡ Matth. v. 19.—Acts xx. 20, 27.



the commission, men can no more be admitted to church-fellowship or the Lord's Supper before baptism, than they can be admitted to baptism before they are made disciples.

III. The apostles strictly adhered to the order stated in the commission, and never admitted any to church-fellowship till once they were baptized. On the day of Pentecost, Peter—first *preached the gospel*, and exhorted the convicted Jews to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins\*—"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized"†—Lastly, the baptized disciples were *added* to the church, and observed all things whatsoever Christ had commanded; for it follows, "and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."‡ Through the whole history of the Acts we find them observing the same order. They went about every where preaching the gospel—those who believed it were immediately baptized—of such baptized believers only did they form churches—and to such churches did they deliver the ordinances to keep as they had received them of the Lord.§

IV. This order is not accidental, but founded in the very nature of things. Baptism is the sign of our spiritual birth, and entrance into the kingdom of God;|| but church-fellowship and the Lord's Supper represent us as already entered into his kingdom, and feasting upon Christ's sacrifice.¶ Now as we cannot in the nature of things have a place in the kingdom of God

\* Acts ii. 14—40.

† Ver. 41.

‡ Ver. 41, 42.

§ 1 Cor. xi. 2, 23.

|| John iii. 5.

¶ 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

before we enter it, nor feed upon Christ till once we are born from above, and possessed of spiritual life; so, if there is any correspondence in the signs to what they respectively signify, we can with no propriety be added to a visible church, and partake of the Lord's Supper, till once we receive baptism, the sign of our regeneration and entrance into the kingdom of God. Whether, therefore, we consider the *order* of our Lord's commission—the *practice* of his inspired apostles in executing it—or the *nature* and *import* of the ordinances themselves, it is clear, that baptism must always precede admission to a church, or communion in the Lord's Supper.

You will perhaps make a distinction between the *institutions of Christ* and the *terms of communion*; between our *obligation* to observe them *ourselves*, and our *right* to urge them upon *others* who may desire fellowship with us. But we can admit of no such distinctions; for,

1. The very nature of church-communion requires, that we should not only observe Christ's institutions ourselves, but also take heed that our brethren observe them likewise. Christians separated from the world, and connected together in a church state agreeably to the word of God, have a peculiar relation to, and concern in each other. They are united together as members of one body, that they should have the same care one for another.\* The bond of their union is the *truth*, and mutual *love* for the truth's sake, as perceiving it visibly dwelling in each other,† by the confession of the mouth and obedience of the life. By this appearance they know one another to be the

\* 1 Cor. xii. 25.

† 2 John, ver. 1, 2.

proper objects of that love which Christ has enjoined in his new commandment ; \* and without it they could not possibly love one another for the truth's sake, or be united in the bonds of the gospel. They must therefore be deeply interested in one another's principles and conduct. Accordingly, they are commanded to exhort one another daily, lest any of them be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin ; † to look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, ‡ to warn them that are unruly, &c. § which implies, that they have a mutual charge one of another, and cannot say, like Cain, " Am I my brother's keeper ?"—The *discipline* which Christ hath appointed in his house, is strongly expressive of the mutual concern they have in one another's sentiments and practices. || It is intended to preserve purity of communion and the exercise of brotherly love, by enforcing obedience to his laws, reclaiming transgressors, and expelling impenitent and incorrigible offenders. If Christ has given such a power to his churches, they must have an undoubted right to exercise it, and be culpable in neglecting it ; and so the whole church at Corinth are blamed for tolerating the incestuous person. ¶ If a single private trespass, committed against a brother, must, without repentance, exclude from the communion, according to Matth. xviii. 17. by what rule are we to receive into our communion such as neglect or despise a plain and public institution of the Lord Jesus Christ ? This would be to assume a dispensing power, to connive at their neglect, and to become partakers of their sin ; nay, in many respects we should be more guilty and in-

\* John xiii. 34, 35.

† Heb. iii. 13.

‡ Chap. xii. 15.

§ 1 Thess. v. 14.

|| Matth. xviii. 15—21.

¶ 1 Cor. v.

consistent than they. More *guilty*, as knowing more of the obligation, nature, and importance of baptism than they are supposed to do.—More *inconsistent*; because, according to our principles, we must look upon them as entirely without baptism; whereas they either consider themselves as baptized in infancy, or have no principle respecting that ordinance at all, as we profess to have. Christ has committed his truths and ordinances to his churches to keep and hold fast till he come,\* but not to dispense with in favour of any. We are therefore not only bound to observe his institutions ourselves as individuals, but to take heed that every member of the body with which we are connected observe them also.

2. We hold every institution of Christ to be a term of communion; because, should we avowedly dispense with any of them, we, by offending in one point, are guilty of all; † *i. e.* we disregard the authority of Christ in one ordinance, which is the same in all, and so must be deficient in our regard to it in any. Hereby also we give up the general principle upon which we can consistently hold any of his institutions whatever as a term of communion. Should one who is of the Quakers' sentiments, as to the Lord's Supper, apply for admission, with what consistency could we urge that ordinance upon him, after having dispensed with his baptism? We could not show him from the word of God, that the Lord's Supper was instituted by a higher authority, is more important and indispensable in its nature, more sacred in its signs, or significative of more valuable blessings than baptism is; and therefore, to be consistent with ourselves, it behoved us to

\* Rev. ii. 25.

† James ii. 10.



yield that ordinance also, and so all the rest which are founded solely upon Christ's authority. No scriptural reason can be assigned for preferring the Lord's Supper to Baptism. To adopt the words of a sensible writer on this subject, "When we consider how much *more frequently* baptism is mentioned in the New Testament than the sacred supper; how often repenting and believing sinners are *exhorted*, by the apostles, to be baptized; how *soon* that ordinance was administered to Christian converts after they believed; what *exhortations* are given to professing Christians on the ground of their being baptized; and when we reflect, that the Holy Spirit *commends* them that were baptized by John, as "justifying God;" while he *severely censures* others, as "rejecting the counsel of God against themselves,\* being not baptized of him:"† I say, these things considered, it is amazing to observe in what small estimation baptism is held by the generality of professors in comparison of the Lord's Supper; nay, the positive contempt with which that divine ordinance is treated by many, calling it a *non-essential external rite*, a *circumstantial ceremony*, a *shadow*, a *mere outward form*, &c. But to think that some professed Baptists themselves should treat it in the same profane manner, to justify their novel scheme of free communion, is really astonishing.‡ They may boast

\* See Mr. Booth's Apology for the Baptists, p. 136.

† Luke vii. 29, 30.

‡ Several Baptist congregations in England admit unbaptized persons into their communion, and so are denominated *free-communion Baptists*. Mr. Booth, in his Apology, has fully exposed the absurdity and inconsistency of such a heterogeneous communion, especially on the part of the Baptists; though I think he pays too great a compliment to their *sincerity*, *conscientiousness*, and *integrity*.

of their pretended candour, generosity, liberality of sentiment, and charity, in opposition to bigotry and narrow-mindedness ; but it does not appear, nor is true charity obliged to admit, that such truly fear God, regard his authority, or tremble at his word, who can knowingly, deliberately, and from avowed principle, make light of any of his acknowledged institutions, and assume a power to dispense with them.

By making baptism a term of communion, you say, " it becomes an occasion of dividing the real children of God." We admit the fact, but refuse the blame. We freely admit, that there are multitudes of God's dear children unenlightened as to baptism; many of them have never attended to the subject; and others, through the influence of custom and false instruction, have seriously taken up with infant-sprinkling in its stead. It is also a fact, that whilst they and we continue in our present sentiments, we must remain divided as to *visible* church communion. But the question is, Who are to blame; those who observe and stand to the scripture rule, or they who do not comply with it? And whether should Christians unite in observing Christ's institutions, or in dispensing with them? The very state of the question is a sufficient answer to such as hold the institutions of Christ of indispensable obligation. We are grieved to think that so many of the real children of God are living in the neglect of the very first ordinance of the gospel; we endeavour to hold it forth to them consistently by our example, doctrine, and separate communion: we cordially invite them to fellowship with us in this, and all the other institutions of Christ, according to the order in which he has placed them; and we earnestly pray

to their Father and ours, that he would dispel their ignorance, remove their prejudices, and subject their consciences to this and every other part of his revealed will; but while they remain in their present mind, we dare not meet them any nearer, nor step over the sacred boundaries which Christ hath marked out in his word, in order to give them the right hand of fellowship. Indeed the great body of Pœdobaptists themselves act upon this principle; for they will not receive any to communion with them in the Lord's Supper, unless they consider them as having been baptized in some way or other.

This, you will say, is contrary to charity, Christian forbearance, and the apostolic exhortation to "receive one another as Christ also hath received us to the glory of God," Rom. xv. 7.

It is indeed very opposite to that profane compliant charity so much cried up in the professing world, which has neither the word of God for its rule, nor the truth for its object; which esteems conscientiousness in error equivalent to soundness in the faith, and legitimates a kind of Christianity which stands independent of keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus: But it is perfectly agreeable to true charity, which consists in love to the truth, and to those who are of the truth for its sake, as perceiving it dwelling in them by its genuine effects. If we esteem all the commandments of the gospel to be plain, important and indispensable; if we see them to be effects of divine wisdom, benevolence, and love; if we are persuaded that men's interest lies in observing them, and that there is danger in neglecting them; then regard to the Divine authority, love to the truth, and

charity to men, require that we dispense with none of them.

If by Christian forbearance you mean, an agreement to differ quietly about the commandments of Christ, as not essential to church-communion, there is no such thing enjoined in the scripture. It would be absurd to suppose, that Christ would give ordinances to his church, and at the same time a command to dispense with any of them. The mutual bearing with each other insisted on, Rom. xiv. and xv. has no respect to any of the precepts of the gospel, but to the peculiarities of the Mosaic law respecting meats and days. We are exhorted to forbear one another in love;\* but this does not respect any settled difference as to the common rule of our faith and obedience, but a just allowance for one another's weaknesses and imperfections in coming short of the acknowledged rule, with the exercise of meekness, tenderness, and long-suffering towards each other in this imperfect state.

The exhortation, "Receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God,"† does not signify, that they should receive one another into church-fellowship disagreeing about the *institutions of the gospel*, or that they should receive any into their communion *without baptism*. The parties exhorted were believing Jews and Gentiles, who differed not about baptism, but about the peculiarities of Moses' law, as has been noticed. Christ had received the Jew observing that peculiar law, and indulged him in it for a time;‡ he had also received the Gentile, who was

\* Eph. iv. 2.

† Rom. xv. 7.

‡ Acts xxi. 25. 1 Cor. vii 13.



never under that law, and now forbid to observe any such thing. In these peculiar circumstances, they are exhorted to imitate the example of Christ in receiving one another as he had received them both to the glory of God, without making any difference of Jew or Gentile.

I am,

Sir,

Your, &c.

*Edinburgh, 1786.*



AN  
ILLUSTRATION  
OF  
**The Prophecies**  
OF THE  
**OLD TESTAMENT,**  
RESPECTING  
THE SEED OF ABRAHAM,  
AND THE  
**NATURE OF THE BLESSINGS**  
PROMISED TO THAT SEED.





## ILLUSTRATION, &c.

*In a Letter to a Friend.*



DEAR SIR,

AT your repeated solicitation, I send you my view of the prophecies concerning which you wrote me; but want of time, and the valetudinary state of my health, have prevented me from digesting it with that accuracy, or comprising it into the bounds I would have chosen. However, not to detain you with circumstantialia, I shall state what I take to be the argument from these prophecies for infant-baptism, and then give such an answer as may occur. The argument I think stands thus :

“ There are many promises in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament respecting Israel and their seed in conjunction with them, such as Psal. cii. 26, 27, 28. Isa. lxxv. 22, 23. Jer. xxx. 18—23. Ezek. xxxvii. 25. &c. and as it cannot be denied that these prophecies have a respect to gospel times, they must point out a spiritual connection betwixt New Testament believers and their seed, in the great salvation; and if so, then the infants of Christians ought to be baptized, even as those of old Israel were circumcised.”

Now, though the premises were admitted as here stated, yet the conclusion is far from being necessary or certain. Children may have the promise of salvation, and yet have no peculiar connection with their parents therein; and they may even be connected

with their parents in the promises, without any title to baptism in their infancy. Baptism proceeds upon evidence that the promises have begun to take effect in their calling, which is obtained from the confession of the mouth unto salvation, and can never go before this, according to the scripture. It is not like circumcision, which was connected with the fleshly birth, a thing visible in infants ; but it is connected with the evidence of the spiritual birth, which is not visible till they profess the faith, and thereby evidence themselves the true children of Abraham, the antitype of these circumcised infants. So that you see, supposing I were to admit the principle, the inference of infant-baptism will not follow. And here I would remark, that when people are obliged to have recourse to the Old Testament to establish a New Testament ordinance, it indicates that they think the New Testament not clear and express enough upon the point, or that they want to model it in some way which the New Testament does not admit of. It puts me in mind of the abettors of national churches and covenants, who, finding nothing of that kind in the New Testament, or at least not so clear as they would desire, betake themselves to the Old Testament, and bring their materials from the typical earthly economy, to erect a worldly kingdom to Christ, or rather to the clergy. These also dabble much in the prophecies, and strange work they make of them when they have a point to drive. The Seceders can even find their party, and the bond for renewing the covenant, prophesied of in Isa. xix. 18 ; and many can show from Isa. xlix. 23. that the kings of the Gentile nations were to have the same office and power in the spiritual Zion that David and his successors, who were anointed types of the Messiah, had

in the earthly Zion. No wonder then, that we find Infant-baptism, both as to its subjects and mode, deduced from the prophecies, by those who stickle for the national plan; for the christening, as they call it, of the carnal seed, is the main pillar and support of a national profession; but to see the same arguments taken up by those who on every other occasion show their knowledge of the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, not only in distinction from the nations of this world, but also from the nation of Old Israel, is indeed very amazing and unaccountable. But not to insist upon this, I shall deliver my thoughts upon the prophecies relative to this subject, in the following order:

I. Premise a few general things, necessary to be attended to, in order to understand the prophecies.

II. Shew who are meant by the *children* spoken of in the prophets, and in what respect they are called *children*.

III. Explain *whose* children they are; or who are their *fathers*, and in what sense they are so called.

I. First then, I would premise, that though these promises point at gospel times, and ultimately respect the true Israel; yet they are delivered in a figurative style, and clothed in a language suited to the typical or earthly economy, *i. e.* the state of things under the new covenant, is held forth in these prophecies by expressions alluding to the earthly typical state of things under the old covenant.—Thus the promise made to Abraham, “A father of many nations have I made thee,” Gen. xvii. 5. would naturally lead us to think, that Abraham was to be the *natural* father of these many nations, especially when we read it in connection with ver. 6. and find from the history that many nations really sprang from him. But when we look to



the apostle's explanation of that promise, Rom. iv. 13, 18. we see that the *many nations* ultimately intended in that promise, include the uncircumcised Gentiles blessed in Christ, following the steps of Abraham's faith, and that Abraham was to be their father in that sense wherein he is the father of all true believers; See also Rom. ix. 6—9. Gal. iii. 7—29. chap. iv. 21—31.—The promise made to David of setting up his seed after him, and perpetuating his throne and kingdom, 2 Sam. vii. would naturally be thought to mean that earthly throne and kingdom wherein David reigned, and that by his seed was only meant a race of kings descending from him, and successively filling his throne to the latest posterity; and especially too as it cannot be denied that there is an evident respect had to his earthly house in that very promise: But when we read Luke i. 32, 33. Acts ii. 30. chap. xiii. 23, 34. we find that the grand subject of this promise, was the raising up his son the Messiah from the dead, to sit (not on the earthly throne of David, nor to rule in the earthly kingdom, nor over the fleshly Israel, but) on the heavenly throne, ruling over the true spiritual Israel. The promises made during Israel's captivity, such as Isa. lii. 11. chap. lxi. 1, 2, 3, 4. Jer. xxx. 18—24. Ezek. xxxvi. 24—38. chap. xxxvii. 2—26. chap. xlvii. 22, 23. Zach. iv. and vi. chapters, had we no other explication of them, we should be ready, from the occasion on which they were made, and the style in which they are spoken, to apply them only to the restoration of old Israel from captivity, the building of the second temple, and the re-establishment of them and their fleshly seed in their ancient possession, together with their peace, prosperity, and safety therein, under their own rulers and governors: And we should



be confirmed in this view from what we read of the begun accomplishment thereof in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah; to which events, it must be owned, these promises do also literally refer: But when we see how these promises are explained and applied in the New Testament, such as Luke iv. 18. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. Matth. xxi. 5, then we are led to understand, that the restoration of Israel from captivity, &c. was typical of the great deliverance by Jesus Christ; and that the promises delivered upon occasion of, and in a language accommodated to, the temporal deliverance, had a further reference, and were only fully accomplished in the spiritual.—Again, the promise of the new Covenant, Jer. xxxi. 31—35. by attending to the words in their literal sense, we should be led to think that this covenant was only to be made with old Israel and Judah, for it is expressly promised to be made with the house of Israel and Judah, ver. xxxi.; it is connected with various promises concerning their restoration from captivity (read the chapter throughout); and what is very remarkable, that earthly nation whom God brought out of Egypt, and with whom he made a covenant at Sinai, are called the fathers of the children with whom this new covenant was to be made, ver. xxxii. But when we consider how the apostle explains this promise, Heb. viii. and chap. x. 16, 17. and what he says of the subjects of it, Gal. iii. 8, 9, 26, 27, 28, 29. chap. iv. 22. to the end, then we find that it is the new covenant in Christ's blood, and that it is made with the spiritual Israel of all nations, whether of Jews or Gentiles.—The setting up of Christ's kingdom is represented by building the cities of Judah, Psal. lxxix. 35. building up Zion, Psal. cii. 16. building the city of Jerusalem upon her own heap, Jer. xxx. 18. and raising up the

tabernacle of David, that was fallen, and building it as in the days of old, Amos ix. 11. The heavenly inheritance is promised under the figure of the land which the Lord gave unto Jacob his servant, wherein the fathers of old Israel had dwelt before the captivity; and the perpetuity of that inheritance is set forth by the way in which the earthly inheritance was continued to the fleshly seed, viz. by descending successively to their children, and their children's children, Ezek. xxxvii. 25. Yea, the Messiah himself is set forth under the figure of David, ver. xxiv. and even when he is promised as David's son, his throne is called the throne of his father David, Isa. ix. 7. Luke i. 32. though it is well known he never sat upon David's earthly throne, nor did Christ's royal throne in heaven ever belong unto David. In short, though the person, offices, and kingdom of Christ are laid down in these prophetic writings with greater perspicuity than in the books of Moses, yet still they are covered with the veil of figures and ceremonial and typical phrases. They describe spiritual blessings by images of civil peace and plenty; the victory of Jesus Christ, by the treading of a wine press, in which the wine is the blood of slaughtered enemies, Isa. lxii. 2, 3. Conversion is represented by going up to Jerusalem, in opposition to the apostacy of the ten tribes, who worshipped the calf in Bethel and Dan; and gospel worship is represented by incense and a pure offering, Mal. i. 11. and by the celebration of the Jewish festivals.

From these hints it is plain, that the prophecies in general will not admit of a strict and literal interpretation, when applying them to the affairs of the New Testament; for this would lead us into the very error of the Jews and Judaizing professors, who minded

earthly things, and affected a worldly kingdom or establishment. Hence the necessity of attending diligently, and adhering strictly, to the apostles' explication of the prophecies, as well as types of the Old Testament; for, as they were able ministers of the New Testament, so they had the infallible inspiration of the Spirit of Truth, whereby they were sufficiently qualified to explain and apply the prophetic word according to its true intent and meaning. We cannot go at first hand to the prophecies, in order to explain the New Testament by them; but, on the contrary, we must enter the prophecies with the New Testament key, by which they are opened to us either by express quotations, the history of facts, or by doctrine.

2. As the language and style of the typical economy runs through the whole of these prophecies, we must not take the epithets *children*, *seed*, or *offspring*, in a literal sense, when applying them to the subjects of Christ's kingdom, any more than we can take the other things that respect them in a literal sense; for this would leave us without any certain or uniform rule of explication by the analogy of type and antitype. The word *children*, literally and strictly taken, is expressive only of the product of natural generation, and every other sense in which this term is used, is by a figure borrowed from this. If then we understand this epithet literally of the natural offspring, we confine these promises to Jewish children, or set aside the distinction of spiritual and fleshly children; for, if the spiritual seed are called *children* in the prophecies in relation to their natural parents, or as springing from them, wherein do they differ, *as children*, from their type, or indeed from any other children, seeing, according to this, the foundation of this term (or the reason



of their being called children) is precisely the same in both? We cannot say that there is any thing more spiritual in the natural birth of one child than another; for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, John iii. 6. To express this, if possible, still shorter and clearer—They must be called *children* in the prophecies either in a fleshly or spiritual sense:—If in a fleshly sense, then the type and antitype are children in the same sense, and there is no distinction pointed out by that epithet betwixt them and any others. But if it be allowed (and allowed it must be, as I shall shew,) that they are called children in the prophecies on another account than their fleshly birth, *i. e.* in a spiritual sense, then all the arguments for the natural seed of believers, drawn from the epithets *children, seed, offspring*, fall at once to the ground, as these epithets are not expressive of any thing whereby they are connected with their natural parents, under the New Testament, more than with others, but of a spiritual relation and birth, typified by that of the fleshly seed of Old Israel, from which the prophetic phraseology is borrowed.

3. The typical people had a concern in these promises in their literal sense, and so by their being delivered in a language suitable to that earthly state of things, they were adapted to comfort them under their national distresses, as well as to direct the faith of the true Israel among them to the great salvation by Christ. The promise made unto David concerning his house and throne, had a respect to the typical as well as spiritual kingdom, and so we find that people taking hold of God's promise to David, and pleading it under their national distresses, when David's crown was profaned and cast to the ground, Psal. lxxxix. 3—51. The various promises made during the captivity



have mostly a literal sense, and were made to comfort the typical people under that most afflicting dispensation of the captivity. Thus the building the cities of Judah, causing the desolate places to be inhabited; building the city upon her own heap; sowing them with the seed of men and beasts; giving them the land wherein their fathers had dwelt, for a possession to them and their children's children, &c. &c. respected literally the temporal deliverance, and the consequent earthly blessings, which were actually bestowed upon them and their children. This is plainly accounting for the style of the prophecies.—Let us now see upon what the prophetic manner of speaking respecting the children and their connection with their parents is founded.

In that temporal economy the children were really connected with their parents in the temporal deliverances and earthly blessings. They are included with their parents in the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham and his fleshly seed. In that covenant God promises Abraham a fleshly seed, and that he would multiply him exceedingly, Gen. xvii. 2. and further promises, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and unto thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, and I will be their God," ver. 7, 8. This promise is the foundation of the whole typical economy. In pursuance thereof, God multiplied Abraham's fleshly seed into a nation, redeemed them out of Egypt, entered into a covenant with them at Sinai, and brought them into the possession of the earthly inheritance: in all which,

the children were connected with the parents, and sharers with them of the earthly blessings.—And, indeed, it could not be otherwise consistently with the nature of that covenant: For, how could a covenant be made with Abraham's fleshly seed without taking in the children who were equally his seed with their parents? Deut. xxix. 10—14. How could Abraham's natural posterity be multiplied into a great nation but by the fleshly birth? The case differs with the spiritual seed; for they are gathered from all nations, and are of no peculiar race; but the fleshly seed must spring from Abraham's loins, else the promise would not be accomplished, and therefore the fleshly birth was included in the promise of multiplying him. How could the promise, which was not accomplished till upwards of four hundred years after it was made, if it had not a respect to the successive generations of infants as well as adults? For instance, how could the promise of giving Abraham's fleshly seed the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession be ever fulfilled, if it had not a respect to the adults of that generation that went up out of Egypt, seeing they all died in the wilderness? But it is clear that God's promise respected Abraham's seed in their successive generations, Gen. xvii. 7. and the promise was performed by various steps, at distant and successive periods, to different generations of that peculiar race of people. One generation goes down into Egypt; another dwells there in servitude; a third are brought out of Egypt, but die in the wilderness; and a fourth are brought into the possession of the promised inheritance; then, one generation after another enjoy the good things thereof: In all which the children must of necessity have been connected with the parents. The blessings being earthly good things, they suc-

ceeded to their parents' possessions as their heirs, even as in the nations of this world ; only with this difference, that they were a seed promised to Abraham, separated from every other race of men, and held their inheritance by a divine tenure, and under supernatural protection. In all earthly things as these were, it behoved the children necessarily to share with their parents, whether in prosperity or adversity, deliverances or disasters, and hence the promises and threatenings respect them both, they being involved in one another's circumstances, Deut. xxvii. 4, 11, 32, 41.

When blessings were promised to that people which were to be of long continuance, the children are particularly mentioned ; for the life of man being but short and transitory in this world, these earthly blessings could not be lengthened out to that nation, but by extending them from one generation to another, or to their children and children's children. Thus Moses prays, in the view of the shortness of human life, that the Lord would make his glory appear unto their children, Psal. xc. 16. The Psalmist speaking of the perpetuity of God's mercy to them that fear him, notwithstanding the frailty and shortness of man's life ; he explains how this mercy was to be lengthened out, viz. God's extending his righteousness unto children's children, Psal. ciii. 15, 16, 17. And this corresponds with the promise of shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love him, Exod. xx. 6. whilst on the other hand, he visited, (under that economy) the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them who hated him, ver. 5. The cii. Psalm, which appears to have been penned near the latter end of the captivity, (see ver. 13.) contains a very mournful complaint of the Lord's chastisement of that people,

and also an expression of the joyful hope of speedy deliverance to the prisoners, and of God's having mercy upon, and building up Zion ; but as the generation that were carried captive were then mostly gone, and the remainder of them could not expect to enjoy long the fruits of their restoration, therefore it is said, " This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord," ver. 18.—and again, " The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee," ver. 28.—Jer. xxx. 18—22. is literally a promise of restoring the captivity of Israel, and of the consequent blessings they were to enjoy, and (for the reasons before noticed) their children are particularly mentioned. " Their children shall be as aforetime," *i. e.* they shall enjoy their ancient privileges and inheritance, even as before their captivity—" and their nobles shall be of themselves," *i. e.* they shall not be governed by foreigners, as in the time of their captivity, but " their governor shall proceed from the midst of them," *i. e.* from their own nation, and of their brethren.—Ezek. xxxvii. literally taken, is also a promise of restoring Israel from captivity, see ver. 21, 22, 23. here it is promised they shall dwell in that very land which God gave unto Jacob, wherein their fathers had dwelt; and this promise respected not only that generation, but to shew the duration of that blessing, it is added, that their children and their children's children should dwell therein for ever, (ver. 25.) *i. e.* for a long while to come ; for in this limited sense are we to understand the words *for ever* and *everlasting* when applied to typical things, as might be shewn in a vast number of places. From these instances, it is plain that the typical people had an interest in these pro-



mises literally taken, and that there was a foundation in that earthly constitution for the prophetic manner of speaking respecting the children. And as the spiritual seed are spoken of under the figure of the fleshly seed, the language must of necessity correspond with the figure; and so we must (under the direction of the New Testament) make proper allowances for what was peculiar to each, in explaining the prophecies. This will appear the more necessary, if we consider,

4. That many things are said of the types which will not apply to their antitypes, and, on the contrary, of the antitypes which will not apply to their types; for not only are they different in their radical and essential properties, (the types being *fleshly, earthly, and temporal*, and the antitypes *spiritual, heavenly, and eternal*;) but there are many circumstances arising from, and connected with these differences, wherein we cannot trace any analogy betwixt them. The types in general, were but partial and inadequate representations even of what they did typify; they were not the very image of the things, Heb. x. 1. and hence they were multiplied; for what single type, for instance, could fully represent the different natures, offices, and characters that concurred in the person of our Lord? What one man could represent a priest offering up the sacrifice of himself, and afterwards entering into the holiest of all with his own blood! The types were not only defective, but in many respects opposite to their antitypes. The sacrifices of beasts typified the sacrifice of Christ; but what did the repetition of them typify? certainly nothing respecting his sacrifice; it only showed their insufficiency to take away sin, and that it was still called to remembrance; for where remission is obtained, there is no more offering for sin,

Heb. x. 1—19.—The fleshly seed of Abraham were also a type of his spiritual seed ; but their being a peculiar *fleshly* race, springing from Abraham by *natural* generation, did not typify any thing of the *like nature* under the gospel ; for the spiritual seed were not to be of any peculiar fleshly race, but of all nations, kindreds, and tongues, Rev. vii. 9. and their *relation* to Abraham, *birth*, and *peculiar privileges*, (as the spiritual seed) are not in any respect connected with their fleshly descent ; but are the *spirit* and *truth* of these carnal things in the fleshly seed. I might illustrate these observations from every one of the types, but your own judgment will anticipate what might be said, it being a clear point that the types have many *peculiarities* that cannot be transferred or applied to their antitypes. Before I quit this head I would observe, that there is something very fond and fanciful in squeezing mystical meanings out of every *minutiæ* of the type : Thus some writers can show us what the bells and pomegranates on the high-priest's robes typified in particular, though I question if we are warranted to be much more particular as to these *minutiæ* than the New Testament revelation directs us ; at least it would be unwarrantable to build doctrines of any consequence upon such a fanciful foundation.—It is enough in many of the types that they bear a general similitude to their antitypes, and in others, that the resemblance appear in some few things. But whatever may be in this, it is really dangerous either to transfer the *letter* of the types into the gospel economy, or to found doctrines upon such circumstances as were *peculiar* to them.

HAVING premised these things, I proceed to the next general head proposed, which was to show

II. Who are the children spoken of in the prophecies, and in what respect they are called children. And

1. When we apply these prophecies to gospel times, we must of necessity take the New Testament explanation of the *seed, children, or offspring*. Now those counted for the seed under the New Testament, are distinguished from the fleshly seed of Abraham by being children of the *promise*, Rom. ix. 8. Gal. iv. 28. *i. e.* they are the product of the spiritual promise made to Abraham of making him a father of many nations, and of blessing all nations in his seed, Christ, Gen. xvii 5. chap. xxii. 18. There is no promise made to believers under the New Testament, that they shall have a seed either fleshly or spiritual, and therefore, as the offspring of believers, none are the children of promise; but the Apostle says of all believers, (be they sprung by natural generation of whom they may) "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise," Gal. iv. 28. and the type of this promise was that concerning the multiplication of Abraham's natural seed in the line of Isaac.

2. They are distinguished from the fleshly children by their birth. They are not born of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man; that is, they have no right, power, or privilege to become the sons of God by such a birth as gave the fleshly seed that title, in a typical sense, under the law, or old covenant; nor are they denominated the children of God by such a birth as is common to them with all mankind: But those who receive power to become the sons of God in a spiritual sense, are such only as are *born* of God, John i. 13. 1 John iv. 7. chap. v. 1. and this birth is effected, not by the flesh but by the Spirit,

John iii. 5, 6. and is the product, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the *word* of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, even the word which by the gospel is preached, 1 Pet. i. 23. which is also their nourishment, chap. ii. 2. The type of this birth was the fleshly birth of old Israel.

3. As they are begotten of God's own will by the word of truth, James i. 18. so they are distinguished from the mere fleshly seed by their faith in that word, or in Christ, the subject of it. Thus our Lord describes those who are born again to be such as believe in the only begotten Son of God, John iii. 15, 16. and in chap. i. 12. they are described to be those who *receive* him, who *believe* in his name : John also connects the spiritual birth with believing—"whosoever *believeth* that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," 1 John, chap. v. ver. 1. which exactly answers to what Paul says, Gal. iii. 26. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." And it is by the confession of this faith that men can distinguish them.

4. These children are not distinguished by their fleshly descent, or their being sprung from any peculiar line or race of men, as the typical children were ; but they are of all nations, kindreds, and languages. Rev. ch. v. 9. ch. vii. 9. According to the covenant made with Abraham, and the promises respecting his fleshly seed, the Lord separated old Israel from all other nations of the earth, as a peculiar people to himself: They were forbid to marry with strangers, and the children begot by such marriages, were (by the peculiar law of separation) counted unclean, and not a holy seed ; but this separation and the holiness connected with it was only a fleshly figure of the true separation and holiness, which is entirely of another king-



and which, when it took place, set aside the other as of no consequence or avail in the kingdom of Christ. There is therefore no more any separated fleshly race to propagate a holy seed by carnal generation. In vain would old Israel plead, "We have Abraham for our father," and still more vain and groundless would be the boast, "We are the children of a New Testament believer;" for we are expressly told, "that in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," Gal. vi. 15. and "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. The Apostle disclaims all judgment of men's state by their fleshly descent. "Henceforth," says he, "know we no man after the flesh;" that is, we esteem or distinguish no man as a subject of the kingdom of Heaven by his fleshly descent, be it of whom it may, though it should even be of Abraham. The word *henceforth* intimates that men were known *formerly* after the flesh, but that *now* such knowledge is at an end. He adds, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh," (that is, as a Jew or descendant of Abraham) "yet now henceforth know we him no more:" that is to say, in that relation, or as having any peculiar interest in him on that account, above the Gentile nations. And in opposition to all claims formed on the fleshly relation even to Christ himself, he further adds, "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 16, 17. Specifying those who are the children of the promise and counted for the seed, he says, "Even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles," Rom. ix. 24. This holy seed is composed of whosoever believeth in Christ, "for there is now no difference between the Jew and the Greek," Rom. x.

11, 12. And the same apostle tells the believing Gentile Galatians (whose parents must have been heathen infidels) "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." From all which it is demonstrably evident, that the spiritual seed are of no peculiar fleshly race under the new covenant; but of *all nations*, according to the promise made to Abraham, Gen. xxii. 18. Gal. iii. 8. and that they cannot be known or distinguished from the world by their fleshly relation to believing parents, since believers may be the natural parents of infidels, as Abraham was of unbelieving Israel; and infidels may be the natural fathers of believers, as the idolatrous Gentiles were of those who were first converted from among them by the gospel. In explaining the prophecies, then, we must carefully keep in our eye this New Testament account of the seed, children, or offspring. The last thing proposed was

III. To shew whose children they are, or who are their fathers, and in what respects they are held forth as parents in the prophecies.

First, They are the children of Abraham, as springing from the promise made to him respecting his spiritual seed. "Know ye therefore (says the apostle) that they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham," Gal. iii. 7. For understanding of which, it may be useful to touch a little on the promises made to Abraham respecting his seed, with the apostolic explication of them.

The promises made to Abraham were of two kinds, 1. Temporal, typical, and earthly. 2. Spiritual, everlasting, and heavenly. The former of these contained the types of the latter, and so it behoved them first to be accomplished.

Each of these kinds of promises respected two things.

1. The *seed* themselves. 2. The *blessings* to be conferred upon them.

1. He was promised a fleshly seed to spring from his loins, Gen. xv. 5. these were the children or product of the temporal promise.

The blessings promised to this seed, were—(1) That radical blessing of being their God, Gen. xvii. 7. which must be understood in a typical and temporal sense, agreeably to the nature of the old covenant, seeing that he threw them off from that peculiar relation when the new covenant took place.—(2) With this blessing was connected the typical adoption, Exod. iv. 22, 23. Rom. ix. 4.—(3) Redemption from Egypt, Gen. xv. 14. thus they were a purchased people unto God, Exod. xv. 16. he gave Egypt for their ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for them, Isa. xliii. 3.—(4) The earthly inheritance, Gen. xv. 18. Exod. vi. 3, 9. This was connected with their adoption; for if sons, then heirs. Even this inheritance was not conferred upon them, by virtue of their obedience to the law, but freely upon the footing of the promise made to Abraham, Deut. ix. 5. even as the heavenly inheritance is also conferred on the spiritual seed, Gal. iii. 18.

2. Abraham was promised a spiritual seed, Gen. xxii. 18. viz. Christ himself, Gal. iii. 16, and those of all nations that should be blessed in him, Gal. iii. 7, 8, 9. for thus the apostle explains the promise, “A father of many nations have I made thee;” compare

Gen. xvii. 5. with Rom. iv. 16, 17, 18. These are the product or children of the spiritual promise, of which the former were a type.

The blessings promised these children in his notable seed, Christ, are—(1) His being their God in the spirit and truth of that promise, Gen. xvii. 7. *i. e.* in a spiritual and eternal sense, as in the promise of the new covenant, Jer. xxxi. 33.—(2) Redemption from the curse. This the apostle includes in the blessing of Abraham, Gal. iii. 7, 8, 13, 14. so they are a purchased or redeemed people to God, as old Israel was typically, 1 Pet. ii. 9.—(3) Justification. This is connected both in the promise, Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. and in the fulfilment, Rom. iii. 29, 30. with God's being their God; and of this justification by faith Abraham was a prime pattern, Rom. iv.—(4) Adoption, Gal. iii. 26. chap. iv. 5, 6. This is included in the promise of being their God, see Rom. ix. 26. and is the peculiar privilege of the children of promise, Rom. ix. 8. of this adoption that of the fleshly seed was but a figure.—Also the spirit of adoption, Rom. viii. 15, 16. Gal. iv. 6. and that in opposition to the fearful spirit of bondage or servitude. This spirit shows they are sons and heirs, Rom. viii. 16. and so is the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, 2 Cor. i. 22. Eph. i. 13. as well as of the redemption of their bodies in conformity to Christ the first born, Rom. viii. 11. which is also called the adoption, ver. 23. and this gift of the spirit is included in the blessing of Abraham, Gal. iii. 14.—(5.) The resurrection of their bodies from the grave. This is implied in God's being their God in the sense he was so to Abraham, Luke xx. 37, 38. and is connected with their having the spirit, Rom. viii. 11. and is that adoption whereby they are God's begotten sons from the dead,



bearing the image of the heavenly man, delivered from the bondage of corruption, Rom. viii. 23. 1 John iii. 1—3.—(6.) The possession of the eternal inheritance, Rom. iv. 16. Gal. iii. 16, 17, 18, 29. Heb. ix. 15. 1 Peter i. 3, 4. of which Canaan was but a type. This inheritance was the hope of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and is also implied in God's being their God, see Heb. xi. 16. It is connected with their sonship, as being joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 16, 17. and with their having the spirit of adoption, the earnest of it, Eph. i. 13.—But to return again to the fleshly seed of Abraham :

The Apostle speaks of Abraham's natural seed in a threefold view.—1. Ishmael was the son of the bond-woman, born after the flesh and not by promise, not a child of God, nor an heir of the earthly inheritance, Rom. ix. 7, 8. Gal. iv. 23, 30. With him we may class Esau, Abraham's grand-child in the promised line, who profanely despised and sold his birthright, forfeited the blessing and was rejected. But there is this difference betwixt the two.—Ishmael was of the bond-woman, and not an heir.—Esau was of the free-woman, and an heir of the temporal inheritance by birth.—Ishmael was a type of the children of the flesh ; of their bondage under the old covenant (which was typified by his mother,) Gal. iv. 25. of their persecuting the true seed, ver 29. and of their being cast out of their father's house, ver. 30. But Esau was a type of apostatizing professors under the gospel ; their despising the heavenly inheritance, and of their being rejected, Heb. xii. 16, 17. From these the apostle shows, that " they are not all Israel who are of Israel ; neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children," Rom. ix. 5—14.

2. Another division of Abraham's natural seed is the children of the temporal promise. The first of these was Isaac, in whom Abraham's seed was to be called in distinction from Ishmael, Rom. ix. 7. and who was conceived by a supernatural power (Abraham's body and Sarah's womb being dead, Rom. iv. 19.) to intimate that divine power whereby the spiritual seed are regenerated, and which raised Christ from the dead. The second was Jacob, who was also called Israel, from whom, in distinction from Esau, Abraham's seed are denominated, and springing in twelve tribes, were multiplied into a nation. These were the heirs of the temporal promises, who were separated from the rest of the nations by the covenant of circumcision, and the old covenant at Sinai, to be a peculiar people and holy nation unto God above all people, Exod. xix. 5, 6. To them "pertained the (typical) adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; and of them as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever," Rom. ix. 4, 5.

Of these again the apostle gives us different views. —Comparing them with Ishmael, he views them as children of promise, of the free-woman, and heirs of the temporal inheritance, Rom. ix. 4—14.—But on the other hand, comparing them with the spiritual seed, or children of the new covenant, he ranks them in the predicament of Ishmael, and considers them as children of the bond-woman, (or old covenant) and, as such, not heirs of the heavenly inheritance, but born to slavery or bondage, and so cast out with their mother as Ishmael was, Gal. iv. 22—31.—Again,

3. He considers a remnant among them both as fleshly and spiritual seed. These are they who, he

says, “ are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of that faith of their father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised,” Rom. iv. 12. As children of the old covenant, and in bondage under the rudiments and elements of the world, they differed nothing from servants : and though, as believers of the promise of Christ, they were heirs of the eternal inheritance and lords of all, yet before Christ came they were at best but as children under tutors, and subjected to the severe pedagogy of the law, having much of the spirit of fear and bondage, Gal. iii. 23, 24. chap. iv. 1—4. from this state Christ came to deliver them, Gal. iii. 25. 26. chap. iv. 5. Heb. ii. 15.—They were servants as disciples of Moses—they were typically free as representing the true children of God—and truly free sons and heirs as imitators of Abraham’s faith.

Now it is this last division of Abraham’s fleshly seed, together with all those who are called from among the Gentiles that compose the spiritual seed of Abraham, as I have already shewn. But because the promises were made to the seed of Abraham, and it being not so clear how believing Gentiles were counted for his seed in these promises, as it was a mystery hid from ages and generations, and in other ages was not known, Eph. iii. 5, 9—Col. i. 26, 27. therefore the apostle insists largely upon that important point, and explains fully how they stand in this relation to Abraham. And

1. By calling them the children of the promise, Gal. iv. 28. he intimates that they are Abraham’s children, as springing from the promise made to him of being the father of many nations, Gen. xvii. 5. compared with Rom. iv. 17. even as Isaac was the child of a



promise. The word of promise constituted this relation betwixt Abraham and the Gentile nations, "I have made thee a father of many nations," and so he says that Abraham is the father of us all before God, whom he believed in that promise, "that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be." And that we may be in no doubt about the seed included in the many nations, he describes them to be not that only which is of the law, but that also which is of the faith of Abraham; and so they are also the children of Abraham's faith, he believing the promise that he might become their father. See Rom. iv. 13—19.

2. He is their father, as the prime example of justification by faith without the works of the law. He was justified by faith in God's promise before he was circumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed to them also. And being justified, he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of his being justified by the faith which he had before it, that he might be the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had yet being uncircumcised, Rom. iv. 10, 11, 12. That is, in short, that he might be the father (or prime pattern) of justification by faith, both to the believing Jews and Gentiles; and so his faith is set before us for our imitation, ver. 18, 25.

3. He is their father as being the father of the notable seed Christ, according to the flesh; and they being Christ's seed, Isa. liii. 10. and also his brethren, adopted and connected with him as the first-born, Heb. ii. 11, 18. must of consequence be Abraham's



seed; and in this sense the apostle expressly asserts them to be so; "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise," Gal. iii. 29.

Thus I have given a sketch of the New Testament doctrine concerning Abraham's seed; how they are so called, and of what they consist. The purport of the whole is to show, that the *seed*, the *children*, the *offspring*, mentioned in the prophecies, stand in that relation to Abraham, and not to their natural parents; that is, they are not called a *seed*, children, or offspring, as springing from their fleshly parents, but in relation to Abraham, who is the father of all believers in the sense already explained. Their natural parents are not their *fathers* as *spiritual* children, but, if they are also believers, they are their *brethren*, they being equally the children of Abraham. To Abraham and his seed (and not to the natural seed of believers, as such) were the promises made; first to Christ, and in him to all his adopted brethren of Jews and Gentiles. So that the fleshly relation of parent and child is of no account here: as they are both *children* in the sense of the prophecies, if they are believers; brethren of Christ and of one another, and fellow heirs of the heavenly inheritance. This will farther appear if we consider,

Secondly, That the seed whom the promises respect are the children of *Zion*, Isa. xlix. 14—24. an epithet given to the gospel church, Heb. xii. 22. and that in allusion to the earthly *Zion*; and this mount *Zion* is opposed to mount Sinai in Arabia, where the old covenant was made with the typical people, Heb. xii. 18. and where the earthly church was erected. The old covenant made at Sinai, was typified in Abraham's

family by Hagar the bond-woman, with whom Abraham begat Ishmael, and this covenant, though it brought forth children to Abraham, yet like Hagar it brought them forth to bondage, Gal. iv. 24.—The gospel church, related unto God by the new covenant, is also called *Jerusalem*, in allusion to the earthly Jerusalem where the tribes of God assembled, and in distinction therefrom is called the Jerusalem which is *above*, the *heavenly Jerusalem*, Gal. iv. 26. Heb. xii. 22. This Zion, this Jerusalem, is represented as the *mother* of God's children, and was typified by Sarah the free woman, Abraham's wife, the mother of Isaac, the child of promise; and so with respect to her state, she is free in distinction from Hagar, who typified the old covenant, and the earthly Jerusalem which was in bondage; and hence her children are also free, and heirs in distinction from the children of the former, Gal. iv. 24, 25. Thus the apostle says, "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the *mother* of us all," ver. 26.—"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise," ver. 28.—"So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free," ver. 31. This Jerusalem is Christ's spouse or bride, her maker is her husband, Eph. v. 25, 26, 27, 32.—Rev. xxi. 2, 9, 10. and to her and her children the promises are made in the prophecies. This will clearly appear from the prophecies themselves; but I shall instance only in two passages, viz. Isa. xlix. 14, 24. and chap. liv. 1—9. both of which are quoted by the apostle, and applied to gospel times, see 2 Cor. vi. 16. and Gal. iv. 27. For the understanding of which I would premise,

That the children of the earthly typical Zion or Jerusalem, were all the fleshly seed of Abraham, the

whole of the nation of Israel who were related to God by the old covenant.—The children of the true Zion or heavenly Jerusalem were then only a small remnant among these, who believed the promise of Christ, and waited for the consolation of Israel. These in comparison of the rest were like Lot in Sodom, Isa. i. 9. and of them the Lord takes particular notice, Mal. iii. 16, 17. When our Lord came into the world, few of that nation appeared to be the true children of Zion; he came unto his own and his own received him not, few of them believed the gospel report, to few of them was the arm of the Lord revealed, Isa. liii. 1.—Rom. x. 16. Though the number of Israel was as the sand of the sea, it was but a remnant of them that were saved, Rom. ix. 27, 28, 29. Such was the state of Israel in the apostle's time, that he compares it to the universal defection in the days of Elias, Rom. xi. 3, 4, 5. And as they rejected the Messiah, so the Lord cast them off from being his people, threw them out of a church state, and dissolved the typical covenant, whereby they were related to him. The Spirit of God in the view of this, represents Zion as complaining of her desolate, childless, and forsaken situation, Isa. xlix. 14. "But Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." To this a most comfortable answer is given from ver. 15 to 20. Then the Lord proceeds to comfort her, with regard to her children; "The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, (that is, after the Jews should be cast off) shall say again in thy ears, the place is too strait for me; give place to me that I may dwell," ver. 20. This is a promise of the great increase of her children. At this unexpected and numerous progeny, Zion is represented as wondering; and indeed the



New Testament declares what difficulty there was about this, and how much surprised the believing Jews were, when they saw them begotten to Zion, (Acts x. 28, 45. chap. xi. 18.) and therefore there is a question about it in the prophecy, as a mysterious and puzzling thing to Zion; "Then shalt thou say in thine heart, who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing too and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold I was left alone, these, where had they been?" ver. 21. To this it is answered, "Thus saith the Lord God, behold I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers," &c. ver. 22, 23. q. d. I will cause the gospel to be proclaimed unto the Gentile nations, and will beget children unto thee, from among them, by the word of truth; and as to their natural birth, bringing-up, and earthly privileges (which were of such consequence to thy former children) be not concerned about these; for I will cause the heathen to perform these offices to thy children, and make the kingdoms of the earth as so many nurseries to rear them up, and their kings and queens to be nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to them, in common with their other subjects.

In Isai. liv. 1, 8. the church is comforted with the promise of a numerous offspring. We need be at no loss to understand what church is here meant; for the apostle quotes the first verse, and applies it to the Jerusalem which is above, and the mother of us all, Gal. iv. 26, 27. which was typified by Sarah the free-woman. And as when Sarah was for a long time bar-



ren, till she was past age, and her womb dead, God promised that she should have a son, that she should be blessed, and be the mother of nations, Gen. xvii. 16, so her antitype here is addressed, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord," ver. i. that is, however desolate, forsaken, and barren thou mayst at present appear to be by the infidelity and rejection of the fleshly seed of Abraham; yet thou shalt bring forth a much more numerous offspring than the earthly Jerusalem, married to me by the old covenant: therefore she is commanded, ver. 2. to enlarge the place of her tent, &c. to make room for her numerous family. And that she might not doubt of this wonderful increase of her children, on account of her widowhood, it is said to her, ver. 5. "Thy Maker is thy husband, (the Lord of hosts is his name) and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called," and that in opposition to his being the God of the Jews only, Rom. iii. 29. So that it is the Lord, the church's husband, that begets these children to Jerusalem, by the word of truth, (James i. 18.) and so it is said, ver. 13. of this chapter, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children," which is the same promise with that in Jer. xxxi. 34. made to the children of the new covenant, even the children which were to spring from the marriage of Jerusalem above with the Lord of hosts; for with regard to the fleshly children, springing from the temporal covenant, Zion was to lose these, Isa. xlix. 20, 21. but Christ, the church's husband, in consequence of making his soul an offering for sin, is pro-

mised a *seed*, and to be satisfied in seeing the travail of his soul, even the *many* who by the knowledge of him should be justified, Isa. liii. 10, 11. and it is upon this foundation that Jerusalem is bid to sing and rejoice in the prospect of children. See the connection of the 53d and 54th chapters of Isaiah.

From these scriptures it is clear, that the promises respecting the children are made to Zion, and not to believers, as fleshly parents; and that the seed mentioned throughout the prophecies, are not called *children* in relation to their natural parents, but in relation to Zion, the Jerusalem above, Christ's spouse.—It is also manifest, that Jerusalem the true church, is not called a *mother* in respect of her bringing forth children by natural generation, as Hagar, and the earthly Jerusalem did; but her maternal relation respects the children begotten by the incorruptible seed of the word, and born again, even the seed of Christ, Isa. liii. 10. his children, Heb. ii. 13. the children of the living God, Rom. ix. 26. To these, and these only, she is a mother: but she has nothing to do with the *fleshly birth*; even her own children can claim no relation to her upon that account, nor can they beget children to her by that means more than others. The children promised to her in the prophecies, were to be mostly of the heathen extraction according to the flesh; with which heathens she had no connection; and the history of the Acts of the Apostles shews us how these prophecies were accomplished, when "God visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name; for to this agree the words of the prophets," Acts xv. 14, 15.

But many who are not satisfied with the New Testament explication of the prophecies on this point, may still object and say—

“ Though the prophecies do indeed respect the spiritual seed of Abraham, the children of the free-woman, the Jerusalem which is above ; yet it appears from many passages of the prophetic writings, that a respect is also had unto the *natural seed* of these spiritual children. Thus it is said, Psal. lxxix. 36. ‘ The seed also of his servants shall inherit it.’ So Psal. cii. 28. ‘ The children of thy servants shall continue ; and their seed shall be established before thee.’ Also Ezek. xxxvii. 25.—‘ and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children, and their children’s children, for ever.’ And Jer. xxx. 20. ‘ Their children also shall be as aforetime,’ &c. From which it appears that the promises are made not only to the children of Zion, but also to the children of these children ; that is, not only to believers, but also to their *natural seed*.”

Now to this I answer, that there has enough been said already in my observations upon the prophetic style and phraseology, and upon the foundation it had in the typical economy, to obviate this objection.—It certainly is not doing justice to the prophecies to overlook the New Testament explication of them, and perch upon such phrases as in their literal signification can only apply to the type. This is like wrapping ourselves up in the veil when it is done away in Christ, and when we may see with open face. However, in answer to the objection, I shall observe, That

Thirdly, *Old Israel*, in scripture style, are called the *fathers* of the new covenant children, (as I observed before) Jer. xxxi. 31, 32. “ Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the *house* of Israel, and with the *house* of Judah. (*i. e.* with the *children* of Israel and Judah) Not according to the covenant that I made with *their fathers* in the



day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt," &c. It is certain that this is a promise of the new covenant in Christ's blood, see Heb. viii. and chap. x. 15, 16, 17. and which was made with the believing Gentiles as well as Jews; and it is certain that the covenant made when Israel was brought out of Egypt, was the old temporal covenant with the fleshly seed; for we have the history of that transaction in the xix. xx. xxi. xxii. xxiii. and xxiv. chapters of Exodus; and yet this old Israel, this fleshly seed, are called the *fathers* of those with whom the new covenant was made. They are likewise so called in the New Testament: The apostle proves at large, Heb. chap. iii. and iv. that the address in Psal. xcv. 7, 8, 9. respects the New Testament church, to whom he applies it, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation—when your *fathers* tempted me," &c. for none I suppose will affirm that the rest here spoken of by the apostle remained only for the children of old Israel, according to the flesh; and yet we see old Israel in the wilderness are called the *fathers* of those for whom this rest remains after the seventh-day rest, and the earthly rest are set aside, which can be no other than the spiritual seed of Jews and Gentiles, who believing enter into rest, Heb. iv. 3, 9. Again, the apostle writing to the Gentile church at Corinth, (1 Cor. x. 1.) says, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all *our fathers* were under the cloud and passed through the sea," &c. where old Israel are called the *fathers* not only of Paul, who was a Jew, but also of the believing Corinthians, who were Gentiles. Now it is plain they were not fathers by natural generation, to the greater part of those called their chil-



dren—How then is that earthly nation called the fathers of the spiritual seed of all nations? and in what respects can the children of the new covenant be called their children? To this I answer (1) That old Israel are called the fathers of New Testament children, chiefly because of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, Rom. ix. 5. of whom springs the New Testament children, his seed, Isa. liii. 10, 11. his children, Heb. ii 13. Christ was a son of the Jewish church; unto them he was in a peculiar manner a Child born, and a Son given, Isa. ix. 6. but unto the new Testament church he is promised as a father, and so what in our version is rendered the *everlasting father*, is by the seventy translated *ὁ πατήρ μελλόντος αἰῶνος*) the *father of the future age*, or world to come, *i. e.* of the gospel economy, see ver. 6. So that what the apostle argues, Gal. iii. 29. “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed,” will in like manner hold here; if they are Christ’s children, then are they the children of ancient Israel, seeing Christ sprang from that nation as well as from Abraham; and they may with as great propriety be called their children, as Christ’s throne is called the throne of his father David, Isa. ix. 7. Luke i. 32. The apostle represents the believing Gentiles as naturalized and adopted children into the commonwealth of Israel, from which they were formerly strangers and aliens, Eph. ii. 12—21. He likewise represents them as branches of the wild olive tree, and grafted in among the natural branches (*i. e.* the believing Jews) into the good olive tree, and with them partaking of the root and fatness thereof, and standing thereon by faith, \*

\* The twelve apostles of our Lord, who were children of Old Israel, may be conside. ed as the fathers or patriarchs of the Christian church, 1 Cor. iv. 15. Rev. xxi. 12, 14. and so this church may be called the children’s children of that people.

Rom. xi. 17—25. For these and other reasons old Israel are called the *fathers* of the New Testament children; and so the prophecies delivered to them respecting their children and children's children, do not respect the *natural children* of New Testament believers, but *believers themselves*, whether of Jews or Gentiles, whether parents or children, they being all *children* of old Israel in the prophetic style, according to the sense explained. Or in other words, these promises are not made to New Testament believers, as *fathers*, but to old Israel, and that because Christ was to spring from them, who is the father of the New Testament children.

Lastly, I would observe, That the prophecies were actually accomplished to the natural children of that ancient people even in their spiritual sense. Peter addressing the Jews says, "Ye are the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers—Unto you *first* God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities," Act iii. 25, 26. And Paul addressing the Jews at Antioch, before he turned to the Gentiles there, says, "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the *Fathers*, God hath *fulfilled* the same unto us THEIR CHILDREN, in that he hath raised up Jesus again," &c. Acts xiii. 32, 33. The promises had a primary respect unto their natural posterity, and so it behoved them to have their *first* accomplishment among them. Christ's mission was *first* to them, and hence he says to the woman of Canaan, "I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Matt. xv. 24. among them alone he exercised his personal ministry upon earth, and, during that ministry, he prohibits his apostles from going into the way of the Gen-

tiles, Matt. x. 5, 6, and even after his resurrection when he extends their commission to *all nations*, they were commanded to preach the gospel first unto the Jews, Luke xxiv. 47. and this the apostle says was *necessary*, Acts xiii. 46. Thus "Jesus Christ was made a minister of the circumcision *for the truth of God*, to confirm the *promises* made unto the *fathers*:" Rom. xv. 8. Among them did Christ first set up his kingdom after his resurrection; among them he had the "first fruits of his new creatures, begotten by the word of truth," Jam. i. 18, and from them did the word of God sound out unto the nations, begetting children to the faith.—Thus far, then, the promises made unto old Israel in the prophecies were accomplished to their natural children or descendants; which will at least partly vindicate the truth of God in these promises made to the fathers, and show how they were accomplished to *their children* and *children's children*!

Now all the senses that have been given with respect to the parentage of the children mentioned in the prophecies, perfectly agree and harmonize one with another.—1. They are Abraham's children as springing from the promise made to him.—2. Of consequence they must be the children of the Jerusalem above, the free woman, Sarah's antitype.—3. As they are Christ's, they must of consequence be the children of old Israel, from whom Christ came, as well as the children of Abraham; and it behoved those of them, who were Jews by birth, to be their children, both in a natural and spiritual sense. But none of these senses will favor the point contended for; for in all the prophecies there is no promise made to New Testament believers as *natural parents*, or in relation to a *natural seed* springing from them; but both parents and children,



if they are of the true Israel, are Abraham's seed, and the children of the promise made to Christ of seeing his seed; Isa. liii. 10. they are both the children which God hath given him, Heb. ii. 13.

As Jer. xxx. 20. is much insisted on to show that the infants of New Testament believers are to be baptized, even as those of old Israel were circumcised, I shall, to what has already been said, add another hint for explaining it. I have already observed, that many of the prophecies, and particularly those respecting the children, were delivered during the captivity, and have a literal respect to the deliverance of old Israel from that calamity, and to their peace and prosperity in their ancient inheritance. I have also hinted in general that this temporal deliverance was a type of the great salvation by Christ, which he intimates himself in opening up his mission from Isa. lxi. 1. see Luke iv. 18—22. But it also appears from comparing the book of the Revelations with the visions and prophecies of the Old Testament to which it alludes, that the captivity of that typical church in Babylon was a type of the captivity of the church of Christ during the reign of Antichrist. We cannot doubt that Babylon was a type of the mystical Babylon, the mother of harlots, see Rev. xvii. and that her fall was also a type of the down-fall of the other, see Isa. xiii. chap. xxi. 9. chap. xlvii. Jer. li. 6—59. compared with Rev. xiv. 8, 9, 10. chapters xviii. and xix.—The woman, or true church, is represented as flying from the face of the dragon into the wilderness, Rev. xii. 13—17, where she is nourished for a time; even as Elijah did from the face of wicked Jezebel, where he was also miraculously fed, 1 Kings xix. which represents a period of the church, wherein the true followers of the Lamb were



to be as obscure and indiscernible as the 7000, who had not bowed the knee to Baal, were in the days of Elijah, ver. 18. The two witnesses are said to prophesy in sack-cloth, Rev. xi. 3. that is, in the garments of their captivity, for it alludes to Joshua's filthy garments, Zech. iii. 3, 4. They are called the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth, ver. 4. in which there is a plain reference to Zech. iv. 3, 11, 14. where the success of Zerrubbabel in building the second temple is set forth. These witnesses have power to inflict judgments on the wicked, "They have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will," even as Moses and Aaron did in Egypt. Again, "if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy," ver. 5, 6. even as Elijah inflicted these punishments during his prophecy, 1 Kings xvii. 1. 2 Kings i. 2—8. The state of Christ's people during this prophecy of the witnesses, must of consequence be similar to the state of Israel in Egypt, to that of the 7000, who did not bow to Baal, in the time of Jezebel, and to that of the captive Jews, when their temple and the wall of their city lay in rubbish, that is, a state of bondage, obscurity, and captivity, and not in that separated visible church state and order instituted for them by Christ. If then we consider the captivity of old Israel in Babylon, as a type of the captivity of Christ's people, under the reign of Antichrist, the mystical Babylon, then the prophecies, concerning the restoration of the typical people, may be explained of this spiritual restoration of Christ's people from the power of Antichrist. And

so when it is said, Jer. xxx. 20. "Their children shall be as aforetime, &c." (that is, the children of Jacob's tent, see ver. 18.) it cannot signify that the infant seed of New Testament believers shall be as the infant seed of old Israel (for they were not so aforetime); but it means that the spiritual children of Israel's tents, or the dwelling places of mount Zion, shall be as they themselves were aforetime, viz. in the days of the apostles, when delivered from the tyranny and usurpation of Antichrist, they shall enjoy the primitive doctrine, order, and ordinances, and when there shall be a revival of the ancient brotherly love, and patient following of Christ, in opposition to this present world, in the hopes of conformity to him in his glory.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours in the truth,

ARCH<sup>d</sup> M'LEAN.

# **STRICTURES**

ON THE SENTIMENTS OF

**DR. JAMES WATT AND OTHERS,**

RESPECTING

**A Christian Church, the Pastoral Office, and the  
right of private Brethren to dispense  
the Lord's Supper.**

## NOTICE TO THE READER.



The Reader is requested to keep in view that the chief principles which are opposed in the following miscellaneous Strictures are,

1. That two or three believers constitute what the Scriptures call a Church.
2. That they are competent to do every thing without Pastors which they can do with them.
3. That there is no work or function peculiar to the pastoral office.
4. That the institution of the Lord's Supper is unlimited, and not to be confined either to a church, or to the administration of a Pastor.
5. That a visible organized church is not the body of Christ in any other sense than as being members in particular of his one body.



## STRICTURES, &c.



THE present day is considered, by some, as a time of great improvement in religious knowledge. How far this is really the case, I will not venture to determine; but I should be happy to think that the observation was well founded. One thing is certain, that there is much speculation afloat respecting the external order and social practices of the primitive churches; but how far the true spirit of Christianity keeps pace with it, is another question. It should ever be kept in view, that the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned; and that without this, the understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge is unprofitable. If we may judge of things by their effects, it does not as yet appear, that many of the supposed improvements of the day have any great tendency to produce Christian humility, charity and unity among brethren. On the contrary, they have been the occasion of multiplying parties and divisions in abundance. Yet, while the leaders in this admit the appearance of confusion, they consider it as “the only way to unity and harmony among the disciples of Jesus,” and flatter themselves that “a day is coming when they will be viewed as the witnesses of Christ, the salt of the earth which prevented universal corruption, and preserved the precious doctrine in which all the disciples of Jesus shall be united,” &c.

Mr. Walker of Dublin, and the Messrs. Haldanes of Edinburgh, have been remarkable for new discoveries. The former has found out, that the ordinance of baptism is derived from a Jewish tradition, and that it belongs only to a man and his infants upon his conversion to Christianity from Judaism or heathenism, but ought not afterwards to be administered to any of his descendants. And he and the Messrs. Haldanes have discovered, that two or three believers constitute a church of Christ, and possess a full power or right to administer and observe all church ordinances previous to their having office-bearers, and without them, and are bound to do so as their immediate duty. Mr. Walker does not scruple to assert, that “*They know not* the scriptural nature of a church, or of its elders, who conceive that the elders are to enable or authorise the church to do any thing which it was not bound to do before it had any elders, and without them:” And adds, “*But I know* that where the sentiment against which I contend is held, there can be no scriptural church.” That is, if a society of Christians hold the sentiment, that elders are necessary to them in any respect, they cannot be a scriptural church: and if we want proof for this strange assertion, let us rest in this, that Mr. Walker *knows* they cannot!

But I have no inclination to intermeddle in other men’s matters; nor should I have taken any notice of these things, were it not for the division and animosities which such sentiments are producing among ourselves, and which are encouraged and promoted by the Messrs. Haldanes and their coadjutors. About three years ago, Mr. Ewing of Glasgow published “*An attempt towards a Statement of the Doctrine of*

Scripture on some Disputed Points," in which he presumed to disapprove of some of Mr. Haldane's innovations, and among the rest, of his sentiment about observing the Lord's Supper without elders. Since that time, a number of antagonists have appeared in magazines, and other publications, against Mr. Ewing, who have fastened upon him with repeated attacks, as if they could never be satisfied till they had worried him outright.\* Among this number have appeared Messrs. Jackson, Ballantine, Carson, and Dr. Watt, who is one of the elders of our sister church at Glasgow, and who, through the sides of Mr. Ewing, has been striking at some of the principles which were universally held by the Baptists in Scotland when he joined them. By disseminating his principles among the brethren, and receiving into the church a number of those who were of his own sentiments, he has obtained the ascendancy of a prevailing party in the church at Glasgow, while his colleagues have been too inattentive, or too timid to oppose the growing progress of these principles. And now finding himself supported by so numerous a party, both at Glasgow and elsewhere, he has, in a reply to Mr. Braidwood of Edinburgh, openly impugned the principles of the profession which he once made, as to the nature, fellowship, and order of a church of Christ, and has at-

\* Though I differ from Mr. Ewing as to several things contained in that publication, yet I could not help being disgusted at the manner and number of their answers. Mr. Haldane had a right to answer for himself; but the group of his keen retainers from different quarters, have manifested a very litigious spirit. Mr. Ewing, in his section on the duties of office-bearers in a church, p. 130—143. will stand his ground against the whole *posse* of his antagonists, because the Word of God clearly supports him. And what he says in another section, p. 157—168, deserves serious consideration.

tempted to vindicate Mr. Walker and Mr. Ballantine in the most obnoxious of their sentiments. In all this he is supported and encouraged by Mr. R. Haldane, with whom he hath joined counsels; and who, it is said, has taken a good number of his pamphlets to disperse gratis. Another writer, in two letters to Mr. Braidwood, has also of late declared himself of these sentiments, and argued for them, of which some notice shall be taken in the following pages.

They inform us now, that they have been long in their present sentiments; but if they were established in these sentiments when they joined us, it belongs to them to reconcile their conduct with uprightness and sincerity: They well knew our principles, both with regard to the doctrine and precepts of the gospel, and also with respect to our social religious practices and church order; for these were then published to the world; and they also knew that had they then professed and avowed their present sentiments, they would not have been admitted into connection with us. And now that they have got in amongst us, Dr. Watt urges us to bear with him and his party on account of their numbers; but we never considered numbers as a test of sound principles, but frequently of the opposite. He also urges forbearance, because "multitudes of dear brethren wish to unite with us, but cannot submit to the commandments of men which rest only on strained figures, and texts misapplied." I shall afterwards take notice of this unjust charge: But while these multitudes of dear brethren view our sentiments in that light, with what consistency can they wish to unite with us? And while we, on the other hand, firmly believe that our principles are founded on the doctrine and precepts of our Lord and his inspired



apostles, how would it consist with the fear of God that we should relinquish any of these principles for the sake of union with them? From Dr. Watt's reply to Mr. Braidwood, we may see that we have little forbearance to expect from him, unless gross misrepresentation and contemptuous treatment be considered as forbearance. And from this printed letter which he hath since sent to be disseminated among the members of the church at Edinburgh, we see the nature of his forbearance. It is allowed to be such forbearance as consists with our giving over visiting some of the societies in our connection; or, if we visit them, consists with our withdrawing, instead of sitting down with them at the Lord's table! Such forbearance is as opposite to that which the scripture inculcates, (Eph. iv. 2.) as darkness is to light; and it will soon manifest itself by its effects in obstructing real brotherly love, and estranging the churches from each other, as it has done in part already; and this indeed seems to be part of the scheme. Would it not be far more honest and consistent, fairly and openly to separate and part in peace, than to give place to such unscriptural forbearance, which can serve no other end than to keep up a hypocritical profession of unity which does not in reality exist? We have received some into the church at Edinburgh who were doubtful as to the principle of observing the Lord's Supper without elders, and we bore with them in love; and should any of these come to be fixed in that sentiment, they have it still in their power to act as honest conscientious persons by declaring themselves, and withdrawing from the connection; for we never professed to bear with any who avowed themselves to be established in that opinion, if they should raise disputes

about it, practise it even occasionally, or endeavour to propagate it among the members.

But the sentiment, that a church may and ought to observe the Lord's Supper without elders, is but a small part of the present difference, as will appear by taking a view of the avowed principles which are connected with that sentiment, and have been brought forward in support of it.

I. The first principle that I shall mention is this, viz. "That the execution of the commission given by Christ to his apostles to teach and baptize, is not confined to any official description of men who are particularly fitted for and appointed to that work; but is competent also to private brethren, according as the circumstances of mere conveniency may happen to dictate for the time." Though I have stated this sentiment in my own words, yet they cannot disclaim it, because it is a well known fact that they have acted upon it. A number of years ago a society at Paisley, who had separated from the Secession, and turned Baptists, proceeded upon this principle, and baptized one another, and that without any necessity. Mr. Walker's pupils, at Dublin, when they embraced baptism, followed the same plan; and a number of Mr. Haldane's connections have adopted the same sentiment, and acted upon it. Indeed it is their avowed sentiment, as we shall see immediately.

If this can be justified in any case, it can be only in a case of absolute necessity, such as was the case with David and those that were with him, in eating the shew-bread, Matth. xii. 3, 4. which few in Britain can plead. But we are reminded by one of our brethren, that "It is written, *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved;*" and he asks, "What would you

think of the modesty, and, I may add, the Christianity of that man who should add, *if baptized by an ordained minister?* Yet we know, that some zealots have thus limited the divine promise, in opposition to its legitimate meaning and design, and to the plain and most explicit evidence, that private brethren, during the age of the apostles, both preached the gospel and baptized the disciples." To this I answer, That we think it would be equally *needless* to add, *if baptized by an ordained minister*, as it would be *unscriptural* to add, *if baptized by a private brother*. But as to those zealots who limit the promise of salvation to the baptism of an ordained minister, we know not how this comes to be mentioned on the present occasion, unless it be to insinuate that we hold that principle, or something a-kin to it. It has ever been our declared sentiment, that many will be saved who have never been baptized at all according to scripture rule, either by private persons or ordained ministers; and we have also received some who have been baptized by private persons without rebaptizing them. Not that we approved of that irregularity, or of the principles and character of the persons who presumed to baptize them; but because we did not view it as affecting their salvation, and because we have no scripture precedent for repeating baptism.

But to return to the principle under consideration, which does not respect the *promise of salvation* at all, but the *authority* or *right* which men have to preach the gospel and baptize. It is asserted above, that there is "the plainest and most explicit evidence, that private brethren, during the age of the apostles, both preached the gospel and baptized the disciples." By *private brethren*, I understand those who have no par-

ticular call nor distinguished qualifications for public teachers. But it is certain, that the commission to teach and baptize, (recorded in Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. and Mark xvi. 15, 16.) and which is the authority for preaching and baptizing to the end of the world, was not delivered by Christ to private brethren, but to those whom he appointed as *public teachers*; and the work he assigned them sufficiently demonstrates this. The first order of these teachers were his apostles,—men whom he had called, chosen, and, in an extraordinary degree, qualified for that important work, by infallible inspiration, and other miraculous powers and supernatural gifts of the Spirit, both for the purpose of giving forth the New Testament revelation, and confirming the truth of it, Heb. ii. 4. These supernatural gifts were distributed in various kinds and degrees among many others besides the apostles; to some one kind of gift, to others another, 1 Cor. xii. 4—12. By these some were qualified for being prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, some teachers, &c. ver. 28—31. Eph. iv. 11. the nature of the gift pointing out the work assigned them, as well as their call to the exercise of it, Rom. xii. 6—9. All who possessed and exercised these extraordinary gifts were not what are called *private brethren*, but were fitted for and engaged in public official services, either in the churches or in preaching the gospel at large.

When revelation was completed, as we have it now in the inspired writings of the New Testament, these extraordinary gifts ceased, (as was foretold, 1 Cor. xiii. 8.) having accomplished their design: But the work of preaching the gospel and baptizing the disciples was not to cease with the miraculous gifts, but to continue to the end of the world, as is clear from



Christ's promise, Matth. xxviii. 20. Now, upon whom did this work devolve? Upon private brethren? By no means; for, during the days of the apostles, and by their directions, ordinary standing office-bearers were appointed for carrying on this work, Acts xiv. 23. Tit. i. 5. And Paul thus exhorts Timothy, "The things which thou hast heard of me, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," 2 Tim. ii. 2.

These are distinguished from private brethren by certain characters and qualifications, by the special work assigned them, and by their official designations. The characters and qualifications by which they are to be chosen, are described in 1 Tim. iii. and Tit. i. 5—10. And though some of the first of them might be possessed of extraordinary gifts, yet none of these are mentioned among their essential qualifications. The work assigned them is peculiar; viz. to oversee, rule, and labour in the word and doctrine, and thus to feed the church of God, 1 Tim. v. 17. Acts xx. 28. 1 Pet. v. 1—5. They are also distinguished by their official designations, such as elders, pastors, teachers, bishops, &c. and the only other ordinary standing office is that of deacons, Acts xx. 17. Eph. iv. 11. Phil. i. 1. 1 Tim. iii. 2—8. These things, duly considered, it will require very plain and explicit evidence indeed to prove, that *private brethren*, during the age of the apostles, either publicly preached the gospel, or baptized the disciples, or that they were appointed to do so in after ages. We may, however, take notice of a few things which are urged to this purpose.

We read, that "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were ALL scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea

and Samaria, except the apostles. Therefore, they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the gospel," Acts viii. 1—4. Some from these words imagine, that *every individual* of the church at Jerusalem, except the apostles, were scattered abroad, and that the whole of them went every where publicly proclaiming the gospel; and hence they conclude, that private brethren must have been among those who were thus engaged. This, indeed, at first sight, appears plausible, and I make no doubt that many private members, both men and women, fled from Jerusalem on that occasion: But it must be noticed,

1. That the word *ALL* must frequently be taken in a restricted sense: Thus it is said, "There went out to him (i. e. John the Baptist,) *ALL* the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were *ALL* baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins, Mark i. 5. Yet we are told, "that Jesus made and (by his disciples) baptized more disciples than John," John iv. 1, 2. And it is said, "that *ALL* men came to him," chap. iii. 26. We also know, that a great number rejected the baptism of both, Luke vii. 29, 30. In this limited sense, the word *all* is very frequently used, see Luke iii. 6. Mat. iii. 5. John xii. 32. Acts. ii. 17, &c.

2. We know that all the individuals of the church at Jerusalem, except the apostles, were not scattered abroad; for there were a number both of men and women belonging to that church whom Saul dragged from their houses and committed to prison, Acts viii. 3. though it is likely that the public meetings of the church were at that time discontinued. Before this persecution was ended, we find that, besides the apostles, there were a number of disciples at Jerusalem to whom Saul essayed to join himself, but they were

afraid of him until he was introduced to them by Barnabas; and when the Jews went about to slay him, some of these brethren brought him down to Cesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus, see Acts ix. 26—31. Thus we have explicit evidence that the whole church at Jerusalem were not scattered abroad. And had it not been for the comfort and encouragement of the church there during that persecution, it will be hard to account for the apostles continuing there; especially too as public teachers were the most exposed.

3. When it is said that “they who were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word,” Acts viii. 4. we have reason to believe that all those who did so were public teachers; that they were furnished with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which were so copiously bestowed on the church at Jerusalem, from whence the word of God was to go forth to all nations; and that these gifts both pointed out the work to which they were designed, and sufficiently qualified them for it.

The history of the progress of these public preachers is resumed, chap. xi. 19—21. where we are told, that “they travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching (or speaking) the word to none but unto the Jews only:” That “some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them,” not only in giving effect to their doctrine, but confirming it by miracles, “and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”

Thus we see, that they were men eminently gifted and qualified for their work, and remarkably countenanced of the Lord, in laying the foundation of the

first of the Gentile churches. Any of them who are particularly mentioned, were evidently public teachers. The first we read of was Philip, the evangelist and deacon, chap. viii. 5.; and as others of them were the means of converting a great number at Antioch, it is likely that they were among the teachers mentioned in the church there, chap. xiii. 1. There is, therefore, no explicit evidence that they were private brethren, but very much evidence that they were qualified and appointed to the work in which they were engaged.

It is also affirmed, that, during the age of the apostles, private brethren baptized the disciples. If they did, then they were not acting according to the commission, which was not given to men as private brethren, but to men appointed and qualified as public teachers; and which connects the administration of baptism with the preaching of the gospel. It is alleged that the six brethren who accompanied Peter to Cesarea were *private brethren*, and that Peter commanded them to baptize Cornelius and his kinsmen, Acts x. 48. Here are two things affirmed without any explicit proof. There is no evidence that those six brethren were private persons. Their being termed *brethren* does not prove this, else it will equally prove that apostles, evangelists, and other public teachers, were private persons, for they are also termed *brethren*, see Matth. xx. 24. Acts xv. 22. Phil. i. 14. 2 Cor. viii. 23. chap ix. 3, 5. Again, it is not said that Peter commanded these six brethren *to baptize* the converts, but that he commanded the converts themselves *to be baptized*, which does not determine who baptized them, whether Peter himself or those brethren; for Ananias commanded Saul to be bap-



tized, though he himself baptized him, Acts xxii. 16. So that there is no proof either that these persons were private brethren, or, supposing they were, that they baptized Cornelius and his kinsmen.

Some imagine that Ananias was not a public teacher, and yet he baptized Saul, Acts ix. 17, 18. It is amazing to observe how persons will strain matters in order to support a favourite hypothesis. This conjecture is perhaps founded upon his being called a *disciple*, ver. 10. yet both the apostles and the seventy are throughout the gospels termed disciples. Though Ananias should have had no particular commission before, he got an immediate divine commission then, which sufficiently authorized him to do what he did, see ver. 10, 11, 15. And it must farther be observed, that he had both the miraculous gift of restoring Saul's sight, and the power of conferring the Holy Ghost upon him, ver. 17. powers which were conferred only on the most eminent public teachers.

To show that any private brother may preach the gospel and baptize, some have instanced in Philip, who was one of the seven deacons, and who preached to and baptized the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts viii. 12. But it should be noticed, that Philip was not only a deacon but an evangelist, chap. xxi. 8. that he confirmed his doctrine at Samaria by miracles, chap. viii. 6, 7. and that he had an immediate call to preach the gospel to the eunuch and baptize him, ver. 29. From the whole, therefore, I am fully warranted to conclude, that there is no explicit evidence, nor indeed any evidence at all, that private brethren either publicly preached the gospel or baptized, during the age of the apostles; nor is there the least intimation that this work was to devolve upon such in succeeding ages.

II. Another radical principle of their scheme is, "That a church is the organ through which the power of dispensing ordinances is conveyed to elders." This principle is true in a certain sense ; but observe the argument they draw from it, viz. that as no church can transfer powers which it does not possess in itself, so it must possess in itself the power of dispensing ordinances, otherwise it could not transfer that power to elders.

It will be necessary here to examine what powers a church possesses *in itself*, and what powers it *transfers* to its elders ; for these are not in all respects the same. The powers which a church possesses in itself, while it is without elders, can be none of the powers of office, for without the office these do not exist ; and the powers which it transfers to elders cannot respect the duties required of itself ; for its own proper and indispensable duties are not transferable.

The question at issue is not, Whether a church is possessed of a power or right to chuse its own pastors ? for that is freely admitted on all hands ; nor is that the power which a church transfers to its pastors in chusing them, for they had it before as private members. But it must here be observed, that the power which a church possesses of chusing its pastors is not arbitrary and unlimited, but is under the restrictions and directions of Christ's law, by which its choice must be circumscribed and regulated. No church has any warrant *from Christ*, nor any legitimate power *in itself*, to chuse any to that office, but such whose qualifications and characters answer, in some measure, to those which are particularly specified in his word, as in 1 Tim. iii. 1—8. Tit. i. 5—10. ; and it may be questioned, on the other hand, whether a church has a right to with-

hold its choice from those who appear to be thus qualified, since it is only by these visible characters and qualifications that it can possibly know who are called of God to that office. No church can, by virtue of its choice, convey any gifts or fitness for the pastoral office which the persons did not previously possess, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, Rom. xii. 6. Eph. iv. 7. ; and this fitness must appear to the church previous to its choice, and as the grounds of it. The pastoral office itself is not the institution of the church, but of Christ, Luke xii. 14. The qualifications necessary to it are bestowed by him ; and both these and the persons possessing them are his gifts to the church, Eph. iv. 12. The peculiar duties and functions of that office, together with the church's subjection to the scriptural exercise of it, are all prescribed and enjoined in his law ; so that nothing of church power or arbitrary authority can have place here, but the authority of Christ alone, to which all are bound to be subject.

The relation between pastors and flock is not formed merely by the choice and call of the church, but requires also the consent and acceptance of the persons called. It is the solemn mutual consent and agreement of both parties which constitutes that relation, and lays them both under mutual obligations to perform the respective duties of that relation according to the law of Christ. The choice of the church of persons fit for the pastoral office, empowers the persons so chosen to take the oversight of it as pastors, while it also engages the church to be subject to their ministrations in the Lord, and to perform all the other duties it owes them as enjoined in the word of God. On the other hand, those who accept of and undertake that

office, are engaged to perform with faithfulness all the official duties and functions belonging to it as the servants of Christ, to whom they must give an account, and as the ministering servants of the church for Christ's sake. Whatever other scriptural solemnities may be used on the occasion, this is the simple amount of the whole transaction. But in all this, the church does not *transfer*, or make over, to its pastors any powers which it previously *possessed in itself*. It still retains all the power that ever it had to chuse its own pastors, and may still exercise that power whenever there is occasion for it. And what is this power? It is well described by one who had closely studied the scriptures on that subject. Speaking of what belongs to elders in ordaining men to the pastoral office, he says, "They have no right to separate any man to that office, whom God has not called:" (by which he means qualified). "His law gives them only the power of obedience, in separating the men who are called by him according to his word." And, with respect to the people, he says, "No people have a right to elect any whom God has not called, or to reject those whom he calls; but they must obey him in receiving and doing all that he requires of them in his word, towards them that are by him qualified according to the description given in his law. It cannot be so well shown where the New Testament says, That it is *my election* that makes a man *my minister*, as where it *forbids me to reject* a minister of Christ, and *obliges me to receive* a man because he is one, according to the description of a minister in the Christian law.—The turning of the part that men have to act, in the choice and ordination of ministers, out of the channel of humble obedience to the plain word of God, has been the spring of all



the confusion and disorder that has taken place in the world about the ordination of ministers.”\*

But, as has been observed, the power of a church to chuse its own pastors is not the point in dispute, nor what our brother has in view. The whole scope of his letter abundantly explains his meaning to be, That a church, previous to its having pastors, *possesses in itself* all the powers, and is competent to exercise all the functions which the word of God assigns to pastors, otherwise it could not by its choice *transfer* these powers to them. Or, in other words, a church or Christian society, as such, must possess in itself a right to perform every part of the pastoral work, before it has pastors, otherwise it can have no power or right to set apart any of its number to that office.

One would think that the bare statement of this sentiment is a sufficient refutation of it. It is true, none can *transfer*, or make over to others a right to any property, unless that property is in their possession, and at their own disposal: But it is equally true, that a society, by its right of election, may *confer* an office on some of its members which it was not itself previously possessed of, and which, till that election was made, neither the society at large, nor any of its members, had a right to assume or exercise. This is a well known principle with regard to all offices and official powers which are conveyed by a free election. A Christian society, though it possesses the right of election to an office under the limitations already mentioned, yet that is a very different thing from its possessing the office itself, or being qualified for it, or having a right to exercise the powers and functions

\* Glas's Works, vol. ii. 236, 237, 240. Perth Edit.

which are attached to it, not by the authority of men, as in worldly societies, but by the authority of Christ himself. If the pastoral office be an ordinance or appointment of Christ in his house,—if he has clearly distinguished, in his word, those who are fit for it from the body of the church, by certain qualifications, by the official designations given them, and by the ministerial work and charge assigned them; then it is plain to a demonstration, that neither the office, nor the work belonging to it, are vested in the church at large, but only in those who are qualified, chosen, and solemnly set apart to execute it.

Now if it is true, that a society of Christians is competent, and bound in duty, to do every thing without elders that it can do with them, and that no part of the order, worship, ordinances or government of a church has any dependance on the ministrations of the pastoral office, then it must follow,

1. That a church has *no right or authority to transfer* any part of that duty from itself to elders; for whatever is its own proper, immediate, and indispensable duty cannot be transferred from itself to an official substitute or proxy, any more than the personal duties of brotherly love or morality can. Nor has any person a right to accept of such a transfer.

2. It makes the *scriptural qualifications for the elder's office not necessary*: This consequence is evident; for if a society of private Christians, who have none among them possessing the qualifications of elders (otherwise they ought to chuse them) can do every thing without them, or perform every part of the work assigned to elders without these qualifications, then such qualifications cannot be necessary to the performance of that work. And why then are the cha-

racters and qualifications of elders or bishops so pointedly stated and required in the word of God ?

3. This principle renders it *needless to chuse and set apart men to the pastoral office*. The word of God not only mentions the qualifications necessary to that sacred office, and by which alone we can distinguish those who are called of God to it ; but it also informs us, that such persons were actually chosen in distinction from their brethren, and solemnly set apart and ordained to the pastoral office by prayer with fasting, and laying on of hands, Acts xiv. 23. 1 Tim. v. 22. Now if this conveys no official authority, nor any peculiar function or work, but what all, or any of the brethren, have a right and are bound in duty to exercise, without either the qualifications or the office, it must undoubtedly follow, that the whole of this solemn proceeding is not only a mere unmeaning ceremony, but its very solemnity must be superstition, if not gross prophanity.

4. According to this principle, elders have no *peculiar work* or charge committed to them which does not equally belong to all the brethren, and so elders can be under no special obligation or responsibility for the discharge of that work but what is common to all : For if a church is bound in duty to do every thing without, or previous to its having elders, then it is plain, that no peculiar work, charge, or responsibility is attached to the elder's office. But what then shall we make of the solemn charge given by Paul to the elders of the Ephesian church, and which he enforces by his own example, " Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own

blood," Acts xx. 28. Again, Peter writing to the different churches throughout Pontus, Galatia, &c. gives this charge to the elders among them: "The elders who are among you I exhort, who am also an elder—feed the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over *God's* heritages, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away," 1 Pet. v. 1—5. These passages sufficiently shew, that there is a peculiar work assigned to elders in relation to the flock over which they are set. Farther, this principle makes the official designations given to elders in the scriptures, such as *pastors, overseers, leaders, guides, or rulers, presidents, stewards, teachers, &c.* to be words without meaning, or mere empty sounds; and surely they can be nothing else, if they are not expressive of any official power, function, or work peculiar to elders, and which the brethren in common have no authority to assume or exercise.

5. Another consequence of this principle is, that it frees a church from any *particular obligation of duty* to their elders as such, or on account of any official work which they perform among them: For if there is no peculiar work or duty due from pastors to the flock, there can be no peculiar duty due from the flock to their pastors. But in opposition to this, let us hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: Paul, writing to the church of the Thessalonians, says, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and be at peace among



yourselves," 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. And, writing to the Hebrews, he says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you," Heb. xiii. 17.

Since we are on this subject, it may be proper to mention another duty which a church owes to its elders, and that is maintenance; for thus the churches in Galatia are exhorted, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things," Gal. vi. 6. And Timothy is directed to instruct the church at Ephesus in this duty: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine: For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn; and, The labourer is worthy of his reward," 1 Tim. v. 17, 18. As this also is disputed by some, we may observe, that the word *honour* here signifies not only respect, but maintenance, as is clear from the reasons enforcing it, in ver. 18. and from the use of the word in several other places, see Matth. xv. 4—7. Acts xxviii. 10. 1 Tim. v. 3.

It ought also to be noticed, that this duty is not founded merely in the law of charity, which obliges Christians to supply the wants of the poor; but it is founded in strict justice and equity, such as the right which the labourer has to his reward, in which there is a reference to our Lord's words, Luke x. 7.; and the apostle places it on the same footing with the right which the priests had to a maintenance by the Mosaic law. "Do ye not know, that they who minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they who wait at the altar are partakers with the

altar? EVEN SO HATH THE LORD ORDAINED, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel," 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. And though Paul declined taking any thing from the Corinthians, for reasons which he assigns, 2 Cor. xi. 7—13. yet he maintains his right to it, 1 Cor. ix. 6—16. and received supply from other churches, 2 Cor. xi. 8, 9. Philip. iv. 14—19. It is indeed honourable in pastors to decline their right to maintenance, if they can do without it, Acts xx. 34, 35. but it is very dishonourable in churches to withhold the reward of the labourer if they are able to afford it; and in this respect the Corinthians were inferior to other churches, 2 Cor. xii. 13.

Now, as pastors, on the one hand, are set over the flock, and have a special charge to feed them, by ruling, watching over, admonishing, and ministering the word and ordinances to them, as they that must give account; and, on the other hand, as the flock are commanded to know and esteem them for their work's sake, and to obey, submit to, and support them in the discharge of that work, nothing can more clearly set forth the distinction between the duties of the pastoral office and those incumbent on the church at large. From what has been already said, it is clear to a demonstration,

6. That the principle under consideration renders the elders' office *altogether unnecessary*; for if a church possesses all the powers of that office in itself; if it can do every thing without it, and without the qualifications necessary to it, and is bound in duty to do so, it can be of little or no consequence whether it has elders or not. In a church where all the members are possessed of the same powers, and are under the same obligations to perform every part of the public service,

there can be no such thing as any peculiar or distinct office. An office which has no exclusive prerogative, no powers, functions, or duties peculiar to it, is a mere non-entity, and to apply to it any of the distinguishing designations of office, is an absolute absurdity.

III. Another principle assumed in support of this scheme is, "That the peculiarity of the pastor's work does not consist in the *kind* of employment in which he engages, but in the *degree*." Now, if this be the case, then the pastoral office has no peculiar *kind* of work or charge attached to it; nor have pastors any peculiar kind of official authority, power or rule vested in them for the discharge of that office, but what belongs to all the brethren, who, according to this, must be all, in fact, leaders, rulers, pastors, teachers, &c. in *kind*, though not in the same *degree*. The scripture, indeed, never applies these official designations to the brethren in general; but why? Is it because, though they are engaged in the same *kind* of work with their pastors, they do it not in the same *degree*? If so, it will be necessary to ascertain what *degree* of the same *kind* of work is necessary to constitute the peculiarity of the pastor's office, and whether that *degree* is to be measured by the quantity or quality of his work, or both. To settle this with precision will, perhaps, require all Dr. Watt's skill, especially as he denies that there is any difference in the pastor's work from that of the brethren as to its nature or *kind*.

It may happen that some of the brethren may be equal to, or perhaps excel their elders in abilities for performing different parts of their work, who yet, upon the whole, would be very unfit for that office in respect of experience, temper, or character; in which case it

would at least be very difficult to perceive any peculiarity in the elder's work as to its *degree*. Should a brother perform different parts of the public service equally well as an elder, there would be no distinction in the degree of their work in this case, for equality does not admit of it ; and so the elder cannot be distinguished by the *degree* of his work from that brother, if there is nothing else to distinguish him. But should the brother in any degree excel the elder in that work, then that *degree* constitutes him the elder, it being according to this rule, the only distinction in which the peculiarity of the elder's work consists. If it be said, that he cannot be an elder, because he is not chosen by the church, and because there may be something in his character which unfits him for that office ; I answer, this is to admit, that there are other peculiarities necessary to the office and work of an elder besides its *degree*, and so contradicts the principle above laid down.

If there is any distinction between rulers and ruled, stewards and households, pastors and flock, teachers and taught, &c. as the word of God abundantly shews, then there must of necessity be a difference in the nature of their relative and respective duties answerable to these distinctions. It must be the official work of pastors to rule, lead, watch over, feed, and instruct the church committed to their charge, according to the word of God ; and, on the other hand, it must be the duty of the church to obey and submit to them that are over them in the Lord, and to receive and comply with their instructions, so far as these are agreeable to the word of God.

It is evident, therefore, that the respective duties of pastors and flock in relation to each other are different



in *kind*: And though the reciprocal duties of brotherly love and mutual edification, belong to all the members in their sphere, and according to their ability; yet they are not teachers or rulers by office, nor are they entrusted with the charge of feeding the flock, and of taking care of the church of God: but pastors being vested in a peculiar sacred office appointed by Christ over the church, and with the official powers and authority which are essentially necessary to the discharge of it, they must have a work and sphere of action different in *kind* as well as *degree* from what is common to them with those who are commanded to obey and submit to them in the Lord. And those who oppose or resist them in the proper exercise of their office, resist the authority of Christ himself, whose ordinance they are.

Dr. Watt, in defending this principle of his against Mr. B. discovers a remarkable talent at quibbling and shuffling. He says, "The term *pastor* or *feeder* applied to elders, is no proof that none else may preside at the Lord's Supper;" and to this negative assertion he adds another as the proof of it, viz. "for it is not *chiefly* on account of presiding at this ordinance that the elder is called a pastor," p. 38. But as there are different parts of pastoral feeding, so unless he denies that dispensing the Supper is any part of it, to what do his assertions amount? Or why does he use the word *chiefly* in this connection? Our argument does not rest upon its being *chiefly* on account of administering the Supper that the elder is termed a *pastor* or *feeder*, nor upon its being the most *literal* act of feeding; but upon its being included in that feeding of the flock which belongs to pastors. If, therefore, he would say any thing to the purpose, he

must deny this; and then he may inform us what right or authority he himself has to administer the Supper, more than any private brother in the church? Is it because he officiates in a more perfect *degree* than any of the rest can? I do not think he can plead this. Why then does he not call on the brethren to officiate in this ordinance, even as he calls on them to pray? Or why may not any of the brethren who chuse spontaneously step forward and officiate in this, even as they do in the duty of exhortation? Till he adopt this plan, we can perceive no consistency in any of his arguments on this subject; nor are we obliged to believe that he is sincerely and firmly established in the principle while his practice contradicts it.

He says, "That even those things on account of which the elder is called *pastor*, are not exclusive to him," &c. But if those things which are the very reason and ground of his being called a pastor are not exclusive to him, how comes the designation of *pastor* to be applied to him exclusively? There are many duties which belong to the members and elders of a church in common; but it is not on account of these things that elders are called *pastors*, though in such things they ought to be examples to the flock; but they are called *pastors* on account of what is peculiar to them, such as the qualifications and characters by which they are distinguished; their being chosen and set apart to the pastoral office; their being vested with the official powers and authority necessary to the discharge of the duties pertaining to it, and their actual discharge of these duties in ruling, leading, feeding, and taking care of the church of God. Because private brethren may occasionally teach, admonish, exhort, and comfort one another, and give their voice in

public discipline, therefore Dr. Watt imagines there is no difference between these mutual duties of brethren and the work and charge assigned to a pastor, except in the *degree of employment*, he being more constantly engaged in these things; nor does he seem to admit that a pastor is possessed of any *official authority*; for he affects not to understand what Mr. B. means by the use of the terms *official* and *authoritative*, though he knows that Paul thus exhorts Titus, "These things speak, exhort, and rebuke with ALL AUTHORITY," Tit. ii. 15. The word is *ἐπιταγή*, which is rather stronger than *ἐξουσία*. No office can include rule without including some authority in the exercise of it, and which belongs not to those who are commanded to be subject.

But the Doctor confounds the authority of the pastor with that of private brethren, by attempting to shew that every brother has the same *kind* of authority with him. He says, "a private brother may state to his brother a command of Christ, and call him to obey it. He can refuse Christian fellowship to incorrigible sinners, or even churches, by withdrawing from them," p. 44, 45. But what similarity has this to the official authority of a pastor over the flock? And what exercise of authority is it in a brother to *withdraw* himself either from an individual or a church? Several have withdrawn from us from time to time; but we never looked upon this as an exercise of authority over us, nor do I believe that they themselves viewed it in that light. He supposes, that the majority of a church may agree, in opposing the pastor's exercise of power, in some one case, and asks, "Of what use would his power be?" I answer, of none at all to the majority; though he had ever so right a cause, all he can do is

to deliver his own soul. But he says, "Every rational man must agree that the probability (viz. of being right) was in favour of the majority." In a general view the *probability* may, but in fact the right may notwithstanding be on the other side, as it has often been. The majority of Israel opposed their faithful teachers, and fell into idolatry; and if the probability was in their favour, the Lord of Hosts was against them. The majority in the churches of Galatia had fallen from the doctrine of grace; yet as they were in a dangerous error, the apostle thought it his duty, as far as in him lay, to controul those churches, and recover them to the faith. The majority is far from being infallible, nor is its voice any test of truth; and this Dr. Watt himself admits, where he supposes private brethren withdrawing from incorrigible churches. Yet, without determining whether the opposition of the majority to their pastors be right or wrong, he says, "no pastor *ought* to controul a church." He farther asks, "Whether is the judgment of the church, or of the elders, to be followed? Whether do the elders or the church rule?" p. 41. I answer, that judgment which is according to truth ought to be followed, whether that be the judgment of the church, or of the elders; and if both of them are wrong, (which is also a supposable case), then neither of them ought to be followed. As to the other question, "Whether do the elders or the church rule?" The word of God never assigns what is properly called *rule* to any except to office-bearers; but a church may deprive their elders of the rule, if they have just cause; and without such cause they would only demonstrate their own unruliness; for they have no authority to act arbitrarily in this matter.



After having argued at large in defence of his principle, viz. that the teaching and ruling of private brethren are of the same kind with that of elders; or, in other words, that there is no peculiar kind of function pertaining to the pastoral office, he says, "that his (Mr. B's.) distinctions of teaching and ruling, &c. into official and non-official, authoritative and non-authoritative, are of a different consideration." A *different consideration*! From what? From the point in hand? By no means: These distinctions are directly in point, and of the same consideration. Mr. B. mentions several things which distinguish pastors from private brethren, and among the rest their *office*, and the *authority* with which they are vested for the discharge of it, and which belong to private brethren in no *degree*, otherwise they must in some *degree* be pastors. Instead of meeting this directly, Dr. Watt endeavours to evade it, by asserting in general that these things "are of a different consideration," without stating in what respects they are so, or whether he views them of any consideration at all. But indeed it is all one to him of what consideration they are, for he asserts that they are of none in the administration of the Lord's Supper, p. 43. All his arguments, or rather assertions, on this head amount just to this, that there is nothing peculiar to the pastoral office but the *name*, and perhaps, a *greater proportion* of the work which is common to them with private brethren. As the necessary consequence of this and of the foregoing principles, it is maintained.

IV. "That private brethren have a right to administer the Lord's Supper to a church of Christ." Some indeed add, "provided they have no elders, or if their elders are absent." This would intimate, that private

brethren have a right from the word of God to administer the Supper, but that the same word forbids them to do so when elders are present ; yet there is not the least hint in the Scriptures of any such right, nor consequently of any such restriction upon it. But that the reader may form a just view of the controversy upon this head, it will be necessary to state the arguments on both sides. We maintain, that no society of Christians can regularly observe the Lord's Supper while they have none among them who, by office, is authorized to administer it to them. This is plain,

1. From the *example of Christ himself* at its first institution, see Mat. xxvi. 26—29. Luke xxii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xi. 23—26. Here we see that he acted not merely as the institutor, but also as the administrator of this ordinance : “ He took bread, blessed it, brake it, and gave it to his disciples. Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them.” These actions he accompanied with words, explaining the mystery of the bread and cup, and the use they were to make of them ; “ Take, eat ; this is my body which is broken for you ; this do in remembrance of me. This cup is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you ; drink ye all of it ; this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” These are the actions and words of Christ as the administrator, the actions of the receivers being distinguished from them, and are their taking the bread and cup, and, their eating the one and drinking the other, and doing both in remembrance of Christ. Here we see, that Christ hath set an example how this ordinance is to be dispensed in the churches of the saints till he come again ; and it is the only rule or example afterwards referred to in all the New Testament ; see 1 Cor. xi. 23—26. chap.

x. 16, 17. It cannot be denied that Christ, in administering the Supper to his apostles, acted as the chief Shepherd and Bishop of his church; and if it be lawful for any to administer this ordinance after his example, it must belong only to such as are appointed officially to feed the church of God, and not to the members in common, or to any private brother who may assume that office for the time.

This argument is vehemently opposed, and, by one of our brethren, in a way not very consistent with charity, or even with that common candour which we might expect from him. He first misconstrues our meaning, as if we were impiously affirming, that elders or pastors hold a similar station to Christ in the church, as he is *Lord* and *Lawgiver*, the *institutor* and *sacrifice* in this ordinance; though he well knows, and every one may see, that our argument respects only the *administration* of it; a service which was not to end with Christ's personal ministry, but to continue till he come again; but as to elders holding a similar station to Christ in this, he knows that we abhor the blasphemous thought. He seems to think, that *instituting* and *dispensing* the Supper are all one action, because Christ did both at the same time. But if they are, it must follow, that none can dispense the ordinance after his example, any more than they can institute it. Though this is a plain consequence, yet I am far from thinking it is his sentiment; for there is a wide difference between *instituting* and *dispensing* an ordinance. Christ instituted baptism, but he never dispensed it outwardly to any, John iv. 2. He, as the great Lawgiver, *instituted* the Supper, and that once for all, so that there can be no farther institution of it,

for he has delegated his legislative authority to none : He also, at the same time, *dispensed* it to his disciples, in which he acted among them as he that serveth, Luke xxii. 27. but this service which he performed must be repeated by others as often as the disciples afterwards come together to break bread.

Dr. Watt also attempts to set aside Christ's example of dispensing the Supper from being any rule to us : He says, " We never can obtain, nor dare we *imitate* the *Head* of the church ; the Lord Jesus Christ presiding in a church on earth. No pastor may *personate* the Lord, and say, This is *my* body broken for you," p. 16. Though there is some ambiguity and want of proper arrangement in these words, yet the concluding sentence explains the whole ; and it amounts to this, that no pastor can *copy* Christ's example, or *imitate* him in the service of dispensing the Supper, without *personating* him ; that is, without assuming Christ's station as head of the church, and counterfeiting his person, and so holding himself forth to the church, instead of Christ, as the mystery of the bread and cup in that ordinance ! One would have thought that Dr. Watt, who steps forward on all occasions, (and indeed without occasion), to display his critical and argumentative talents, might, at least, have easily distinguished between a pastor's dispensing the Supper, by repeating the words of institution expressly *as Christ's words*, and his repeating them *as his own words*, and so declaring that it is *his own body* that is broken for them. Such a distinction is obvious to every one possessed of common sense. He admits, that a private brother, or even a sister, may dispense the Supper, by reading or repeating the same words, and doing the same actions which Christ



did on that occasion, without any such shocking imputation; but a pastor (whose proper charge it is to feed the church of God) cannot, according to him, do the same thing without personating Christ, and telling the church that it is his own body that is broken for them! I believe that few will think this reasoning merits a serious refutation; and whether it deserves a greater share of pity or contempt, I leave to the judgment of the candid reader. If Dr. Watt be a pastor, as he calls himself; if, as such, he dispenses the Supper, reminding the church of our Lord's words on that occasion, and doing the same actions, he acts that very part which he condemns. And if he dispenses it only as a private brother, and is really persuaded that any of the brethren has the same right to perform that service, why does he not allow them to do so when pastors are present? One would be apt to conclude from this, that his arguments (if they deserve that name) are as much at variance with his real conviction as they are with his practice.

He says, "Christ gave this ordinance to his apostles, and commanded them as his disciples, and on the common footing of the privileges of all his disciples, *Do this in remembrance of me* ; and he did not limit the observance to an organized society," p. 16. Another brother says, "From the institution, we learn who are to observe it," viz. disciples; "in what manner it is to be administered, and the gracious ends for which it is appointed. But the institution does not inform us by whom (*i. e.* by what order of men) the Supper is to be dispensed. Jesus does not say, *Do this in remembrance of me* ; but it must be dispensed by office-bearers," &c.

There can be no doubt that this ordinance was

given to disciples to be observed by them. All things were given to the disciples, and for their benefit ; all ordinances, and all gifts and office-bearers, even the most eminent and extraordinary, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers ; all things are theirs, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. Eph. iv. 11, 12. But what is the inference from all this ? Is it that office-bearers, as such, have no peculiar charge to feed the church of God by dispensing public ordinances : or, if they have, that the Lord's Supper is an exception ? This would be a strange and unnatural inference indeed. But it is said, "Jesus does not say, It must be dispensed by office-bearers." True ; but neither does he say, It may be dispensed by private members. Here then the balance appears equal ; but if we place in one scale the example of Christ in dispensing it, with the ministry he hath assigned to office-bearers, the other scale, light as air, will *quick up fly, and kick the beam*. To take the commandment, "Do this in remembrance of me," abstractedly by itself, and then to argue from what it does not *expressly* say, is both an injudicious and unfair method of arguing, and would make sad work of a great part of the word of God. This commandment does not *expressly* say in what manner the Supper is to be administered ; whether it belongs to a church, organized or unorganized ; whether it must be a church coming statedly together into one place to eat it, or whether it may not be observed by solitary individuals ; for precepts are often addressed to multitudes which require detached individual obedience. Nor does the commandment inform us how often the Supper is to be observed, whether yearly, quarterly, monthly, or weekly, nor on what day of the week.

Our opponents must here confess, that they do not gather these particulars from the commandment itself, but are obliged to have recourse to other passages of Scripture: And is it reasonable that they should restrict us to the commandment for proof that the Supper belongs to an organized church, and that it ought to be dispensed by office-bearers? Or are they at liberty to deny these things if not expressly mentioned in the mandatory part of the institution?

Dr. Watt says, that "the commandment of Christ in this instance, without any example but that referred to in the commandment, is a sufficient rule," p. 16. And the other writer above referred to admits, that "from the institution we learn in what *manner* it is to be administered;" But if the commandment refers to Christ's example as to the *manner* of administering it, then it must be an imitable example, and commanded to be imitated by those whom he hath appointed to feed the flock of God. Yet the Doctor says, "We dare not imitate the Head of the church, the Lord Jesus presiding in a church on earth." If so, how can he view the commandment as referring to that example? and if he dares not follow it in his manner of administering that ordinance, where is his rule for administering it at all? I am of opinion, that the command, "This do in remembrance of me," refers both to the *dispensing* and *receiving* of that ordinance; and that as it refers to the former it is given to office-bearers, but as it refers to the latter it is given to them all, "drink ye all of it;" for both these parts were distinctly exemplified.

He farther says, "Mr. B. complains, that we here take many things for granted which we ought to prove. This would be a just charge, perhaps, if we rested

solely on such reasoning for our warrant for the observance of the Lord's Supper. But we rest on the *broad ground of unlimited institution*, and use these arguments as concordant to the institution, and also in opposition to arbitrary limitations," p. 18. He has no doubt a meaning of his own to the words *unlimited institution*; but surely the institution of the Supper is not unlimited, either as to those who have a right to dispense or receive it, or as to its substance or design. *Unlimited institution* appears to me an absurdity; for every thing that is instituted must be limited and regulated by the law of its institution. If he means to say, that they admit of no other limitations than what are *expressly stated* in the words of the institution, this is not the case; for I know none, except himself, who do not limit it to what they call a church, and to the first day of the week, though the words do not express this; and while they extend to private brethren the right of dispensing this ordinance in certain circumstances, they limit it in others, though there is not the least hint of that right, nor of the circumstances under which it is to be limited, either in the words of institution or any where else. I cannot suppose that he imagines the institution is so unlimited as to leave us at liberty to observe it in any manner we please; and therefore, if he means any thing to the point, it must be this, that the *dispensing* of the Supper in all circumstances, is, by unlimited institution, made the equal right of every member, even as the *receiving* of it is. This, I apprehend, is the broad ground on which he rests his reasoning. But as it is the very point in debate, it requires more than his bare assertion to determine it; and if his broad ground of unlimited institution be itself a wild and unfounded imagination,



as it evidently is, what will become of all his concordant reasonings which he rests upon it? Christ, in administering the Supper, has set a plain example how those who are appointed office-bearers in his church should administer it till he come again; and all the contradictory reasonings that have been urged against this, whether, on the one hand, from its being inimitable by any, or, on the other hand, from its being competent to every private brother, are altogether unworthy of a serious answer.

2. The peculiar *work*, with the corresponding official *designations* given to elders, clearly shew, that dispensing the public ordinances is assigned to them, consequently the dispensing of the Lord's Supper. They are commanded to feed Christ's sheep and lambs, John xxi. 15—18.—to feed the church of God, Acts xx. 28.—to feed the flock of God, 1 Pet. v. 2. The original word *poimainein*, rendered *to feed*, properly signifies to perform the office of a shepherd. It imports rule and authority, and is figuratively used to express the exercise of civil government, 2 Sam. v. 2. Psal. lxxviii. 71, 72. but more frequently the exercise of a religious office in the church, Jer. iii. 15. ch. xxiii. 4. Hence elders or bishops are termed *Poimenai*, *i. e.* shepherds, pastors, or feeders, Eph. iv. 11. as being official *feeders* of the flock committed to their charge; which feeding comprehends all the duties of their office, such as watching over, ruling, teaching, exhorting, comforting, and admonishing them, and, among other ordinances, administering the Lord's Supper to them, in the name and after the example of Christ the (*Archipoimen*) *Chief Shepherd*, 1 Pet. v. 4. Hence also elders or bishops are termed (*oikonomoi*) *stewards* of God, Tit. i. 7. The word signifies one

who is set over a household, and hath the charge and care of its affairs committed to him, and particularly to deal out or *dispense* the necessary provisions to the family; so our Lord explains it, "Who then is that faithful and wise (*oikonomos*) *steward*, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?" Luke xii. 42. It is therefore evident, that pastors have a peculiar and appropriate charge and work assigned them, and which pertains to their office; an office involving authority, and which none can warrantably assume or exercise till they are scripturally chosen and set apart to it.

To this it has been answered, "That the brethren nourish one another with the words of faith and good doctrine, which, it is presumed, is the same as *feeding*; and that therefore it is not the exclusive work of pastors." Though it is the duty of brethren mutually to exhort and admonish one another; yet the passage alluded to in 1 Tim. iv. 6. says nothing of that, but respects the exercise of Timothy's office, "as a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished by the words of the faith and of the good doctrine, to the knowledge of which he had attained." The word *feeding* is never applied to the mutual instructions and exhortations of brethren, but is a term expressive of, and appropriated to the exercise of the pastor's office. The word of God no where represents the brethren as official teachers or pastors, or as set over the flock with a charge to feed it; nor is the ministry of the word and dispensing of ordinances committed to them.

But Dr. Watt soon gets rid of this argument. He has nothing to do but to observe, that the words *pastor*, *feeding*, &c. are metaphors; and to assert, that the

most of our proofs of the point at issue “rest on no sounder basis than strained figures, verbal criticisms, applied to figurative expressions; and that this is a species of reasoning neither proper nor necessary for plain Christians, nor within their reach,” p. 26, 27. But this misrepresentation of our reasoning and proofs is of small consequence when compared to his treatment of the language in which the Holy Spirit saw proper to communicate a considerable part of revelation to men. He says, “Strict reasoning requires definitions; as definitions reject metaphors, and as these expressions (*viz. pastor, feeding, &c.*) are metaphorical, we can expect little conclusive reasoning from them.” Here he lays it down as his rule of strict reasoning, to reject all scripture metaphors, as having no certain or determinate sense or application; and so finds himself at liberty to set aside every argument as inconclusive, which rests in any degree on the current sense of a metaphor, though explained and applied by the Holy Spirit himself, as are the metaphors he objects to in the present case. For instance, the word *shepherd* or *pastor* literally signifies one whose business is to feed or take care of a flock of sheep, Luke ii. 8.; and though it is often figuratively applied to God in respect of his people, Psal. xxiii. 1. lxxx. 1.; to Christ, Isa. xl. 11. John x. 11, 14. and also to the elders or bishops of a Christian church; yet its meaning, in such applications, is, at least, as obvious and determinate as its literal sense is, and is by far more fully explained by the Holy Spirit. The same observation will apply to the word *feeding*, which comprehends every part of the shepherd’s work in relation to the sheep; and this is more particularly set forth in the figurative than literal use of it, see Psal. xxiii. lxxx. 1. Isa. xl. 11.

Ezek. xxxiv. 11—20. All the directions given to office-bearers respecting the exercise of their ministry, are just so many literal explanations of the manner in which they are to feed the flock of God, see Acts xx. 28—36. with the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. I know not therefore why he should accuse us of *straining* these figures for maintaining, that dispensing the word and ordinances is part of the pastor's work in feeding the flock. To affirm that "this is a species of reasoning neither proper nor necessary for plain Christians, nor within their reach," and that strict reasoning rejects metaphors, however clearly explained and applied, is to throw a dishonourable reflection upon the diction of the Holy Spirit, as not calculated to make the simple wise, and to offer an insult to the understanding of the plainest Christian; for what Christian is so ignorant (unless confounded by artful sophistry) as not to know, that it belongs to the pastors of a church to administer the word and ordinances to the flock committed to their charge, and that for the purpose of their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace? Yet he at the same time maintains, that it is within the reach of these same plain Christians themselves, to administer the word and ordinances to each other, and to interfere with every part of the pastor's work, p. 21.

He says, "The *principal idea* intended by the terms *shepherd* and *feeding*, as applied to churches, is that of *guidance* and *leading*.—Pastors are *guides* or *leaders* to a society on their journey through this world heavenward," p. 21. Feeding, no doubt, implies *guidance* or *leading*, as necessary to it; and we may add, it requires seeking out, ruling, watching, and protecting the sheep, as these and other particulars are detailed



in Ezek. xxxiv. 11—25. But on what authority does he affirm, “ that the *principal idea* intended by the term *feeding*, is *guidance* or *leading* in a journey ? ” This sense is not the strict meaning of the word ; for when *leading* is simply or chiefly intended, it is always expressed in Greek by other terms. A shepherd, in feeding his sheep, does not lead them in a journey, but to green pastures where they may feed, see Psal. xxiii. 2, 5. Ezek. xxxiv. 14, 15. John x. 3, 4, 9. *Leading* is not the *principal idea* intended, nor indeed the proper sense of the word (ποιμαίνω) *to feed*, at all, though it is connected with and implied in it, even as *ruling* is ; for a shepherd, if he would feed his flock in proper pastures, must both lead and rule them. And as the original term is never used solely, or even chiefly, to signify leading ; so it occurs where neither leading nor ruling is implied, but simply feeding with food, as in Jude, ver. 12. Now as the word of God is often compared to food, suited both to babes and those of full age ; as the Lord’s Supper represents a church feeding on Christ’s sacrifice ; and as pastors, agreeably to their official designation, are enjoined to feed the church of God, being appointed as stewards over his household to give them their portion of meat in due season, what sober-minded and unprejudiced Christian can desire stronger evidence, that the church must be fed by administering to it the word and ordinances ; and that this is a work and charge peculiarly assigned to pastors, as distinguished from those whom they are commanded to feed ? Is there any straining of figures here, or is it a method of reasoning beyond the reach of the plainest Christians ?

He says, “ To render the argument from the word *pastor*, and the term *feeding* of any use, it should be

shewn, that the expression *feeding* applies *solely* or *chiefly* to presiding at the Lord's Supper."—But the argument requires no such thing. It is sufficient to shew, that dispensing the Supper, according to the pattern which Christ hath given, is *part* of that feeding which belongs to those whom he hath appointed as pastors over his church.—He farther adds, that it must also be shewn, "that *feeding* is so peculiar to the pastor, that none else may, in any degree, interfere with it," p. 20. But it is enough here to shew, that feeding a church is connected with leading and ruling it, and is assigned only to such as sustain a public office, who are scripturally qualified, and have been chosen and set apart to that work. To such alone is the charge expressly given to feed the church of God; and therefore to such it peculiarly belongs. But as he affirms that this feeding is competent to private brethren, it belongs to him to shew the scripture authority for it. The duties of mutual edification enjoined upon the brethren in common will not prove this, unless he can shew that the pastoral work is committed to them, and that they are under a solemn charge to feed the church of God.

He thinks that private brethren are not excluded from interfering with the exercise of the pastor's office. Yet we know that the divine displeasure was awfully manifested against all who presumed to interfere with the priests' office under the law, Numb. xvi. 1 Sam. xiii. 11—15. 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—21. The children of Israel might plead that all the Lord's people were holy; that many religious duties were common to them with Aaron and his sons; and Saul, on account of the priest's absence, might plead necessity for what he did; but none of these pleas were sustained as suf-

ficient to justify their interference with the priest's office. I am aware of all the objections that can be brought against the application of this to the present case, but I consider them as of no weight at all; for though the pastors of Christian churches are neither sacrificing priests, nor types of Christ in his priestly office; yet their office is equally of divine appointment, and the official functions pertaining to it equally peculiar to them. Will any affirm, that the ministry assigned them is less sacred, spiritual and important than that which was assigned to the ministers of religion under the law? or that the character and qualifications necessary to the proper discharge of it are of less consequence? If these things cannot be affirmed with truth, then it must be equally presumptuous in private brethren to interfere with what belongs peculiarly to the pastoral office, as it was in what belonged to the priestly; nor does the difference between these two offices, as to their nature and end, make any difference in this respect. The Christian *royal priesthood* (1 Pet. ii. 9.) have no right to interfere with what is peculiar to the pastoral office, any more than the Jewish *kingdom of priests*, (Exod. xix. 6.) had to interfere with what was peculiar to the priestly.

Referring to his Essays, he says, "It is no part of the controversy in these Essays, whether it be proper to call a small society, meeting for worship without elders, a *church* or not.—Though it could be proved that such a society is not a church, it cannot be proved that they may not eat the Lord's Supper.—But this writer," (viz. the Editor of the Christian Advocate,) "takes it for granted, that the Lord's Supper is *allowed to be a church ordinance*, which, in arguing with me, is in part begging the question." We have,

indeed, hitherto understood our opponents as admitting that the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance. They have expressly declared this; and, upon any other principle, they had no occasion to contend so strenuously, that the lowest plurality, even two or three, constitute a church of Christ: But here Dr. Watt maintains, that as to observing the Lord's Supper, it is of no consequence whether they be a church or not. It is not my intention here to prove that the Lord's Supper is a church-ordinance, that being abundantly proved by other hands,\* and fully allowed by many of our opponents; but shall only observe, that the multitude of disciples at Jerusalem, at Corinth, and at Troas were churches; that these observed the Lord's Supper, and are the only instances of this recorded in scripture; that they came together into one place to eat it, and are forbidden to eat it separately, but are commanded to tarry one for another, Acts xx. 7. 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21, 33. that they may exhibit the joint participation of the body of Christ, 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

But Dr. Watt does not limit this ordinance to any thing that can be called a church: He rests his warrant for the observance of it on what he calls *the broad ground of unlimited institution*; so that, according to him, it may be observed by any company of Christians, whether it has elders or not; whether it consists of many, or only of two or three; nay, whether it can be called *a church* or not; these are with him mere circumstances of no consideration in this matter; the Lord's Supper must be observed at any rate; and to take it for granted that he allows it to be an ordinance peculiar to a church, is only begging the question.

\* See Letters on various Subjects, by W. Braidwood, p. 48—70.



He observes that "the Reviewer," (viz. the Editor of the Christian Advocate) "urges, that the opposite sentiment deduced would lead to the idea, that *two females* meeting together for Christian worship, &c. ought to communicate in the ordinance of the Supper;" to this the Doctor answers, *And why not?* The Reviewer considered this idea as absurd; but to this he again answers, *Why absurd?* p. 29. So that, according to him, no reason can be assigned why two females may not meet by themselves, and communicate in the ordinance of the Supper; and that there is no absurdity in maintaining this. But when the Reviewer took notice of this as a plain avowal of that sentiment, and a vindication of the practice, he makes the following shuffling reply, "When it was supposed absurd to say, that two females meeting together for Christian worship, &c. ought to communicate in the Lord's Supper, I answered, *And why not?* I made in the quotation a blank, or &c. in order to steer clear of the question, whether such two females are to be called *a church* or not, which I judge very unimportant. But with regard to *the Lord's Supper*, I observe, the case is one of my opponent's making. I have said, *Essays*, p. 6. the discussion of it is necessarily trifling." But though he declines to answer the question, as to whether the two supposed females are a church or not; yet from what follows, it is clearly his sentiment, that, however they may come together, whether statedly, occasionally, or accidentally, if they join in any act of worship at all, they ought to observe the Lord's Supper; for he again asks, "Why not? What is there in this more than in any other social ordinance, that they cannot observe?" And, according to his sentiments, he might also have asked, What is there in observing it in communion

with a church, more than with two, either males or females, who may chuse, or find it more convenient, to meet by themselves for that purpose ? He could not, consistently with the principles he has laid down, reasonably find fault with such a plan ; nor could he urge upon them that the Supper is a church communion ordinance, and that therefore they ought to come together into one place with a church to eat it ; for as to whether they are a church or not, he judges that to be very unimportant.

He admits indeed, that the Supper is a *social* ordinance, and that an individual observing it could not represent the joint communion of believers in the benefits of Christ's death, p. 4. but then he maintains that this can be represented in the joint communion of two. He carefully avoids the scripture phrase on this head ; for instead of saying, "the communion of the body of Christ," he terms it "the joint communion of believers, p. 4. However trifling this distinction may appear, yet it is not without design ; for as he declines answering the question whether two believers are a *church* or not, he might think it improper to say, that they could represent *the communion of the body of Christ* in the Supper. Besides, "Mr. Braidwood," he observes, "founds an argument on the phrase, *the body of Christ*. The argument is shortly this, a Christian church is compared to an organized body, such as the human body, therefore it must be an organized body. In support of this argument, reference is made to Eph. iv. 4—17. 1 Cor. xii. 21—27. where the gifts which the Lord ascended on high to bestow, likewise enter into the description of the body of Christ, and are necessary," p. 10. Here he gives a short but just state of the ground of Mr. B's. argument ; but such is

his inveterate opposition to him that he controverts every word of it; and not only represents him as ignorant of the meaning of the phrase, *the body of Christ*, but attempts to set his application of it to any particular church to ridicule, by asking him, "Whether an elder be a *hand* or an *eye*? Whether a deacon be an *ear* or a *foot*?"

With regard to the phrase, *the body of Christ*, he says, "It cannot be made appear that it ever is applied to a single congregation *as a body*, but only as consisting of members *of the body*, viz. the catholic church, the whole church of the redeemed." Whether by the catholic church or whole church of the redeemed he means all in heaven and on earth whom Christ has redeemed by his blood, or a catholic church consisting of all the redeemed on earth, is uncertain. It is but comparatively a small part of the whole church of the redeemed that at any particular period is to be found in this world; and it is only to that part of it in successive generations that the gifts and offices mentioned are needful: But this is never represented as a church by itself, but as forming a part of the general assembly and church of the first born, which includes the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 23. This is Christ's one body, Eph. iv. 4. his church for which he gave himself, chap. v. 25—28. But then, where is this church, which at present is invisible to us, represented or made *visible* in this world? Not surely in any catholic *visible* church on earth, nor in separate individuals; but it is in the churches of the saints that Christ's true catholic church is represented, and has its visibility upon earth. Each of these churches, if composed of visible believers, and formed upon the apostolic plan as to doctrine, worship, order and discipline,

is a visible representation of the whole church of the redeemed in heaven and on earth ; and hence it is, that the same things are said of it, and the same epithets applied to it. Is the catholic invisible church termed God's temple, building, house, Christ's body, spouse, &c. Eph. ii. 21. Heb. x. 21. Col. i. 18. Rev. xxi. 2, 9. ? So also is a particular church of visible saints, see 2 Cor. vi. 16. 1 Cor. iii. 9, 16, 17. Eph. ii. 22. 1 Tim. iii. 15. 1 Cor. xii. 27. 2 Cor. xi. 2. It was in such a visible church that the gifts bestowed by Christ for gathering in and edifying his body were found and tried, Acts i. 21—25. 1 Tim. iii. 1—8. There some of them were stationed to feed the flock of God, Acts xiii. 1. chap. xiv. 23. chap. xx. 28. and from thence others were sent forth, and recommended to the grace of God for more extensive services, Acts viii. 14. chap. xi. 22. chap. xiii. 2, 3, 4. chap. xiv. 26, 27. To such a church were all the ordinances delivered, both as to worship and the highest acts of discipline, Matth. xviii. 17. 1 Cor. v. To such a church does the Lord's Supper belong, 1 Cor. xi. 23. and as the bread and cup represent Christ's broken body and shed blood, so a church of visible believers, coming statedly together into one place and jointly partaking of that ordinance, is the only visible representation on earth of the invisible and spiritual communion of the whole church of the redeemed in partaking of Christ's sacrifice, 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. John vi. 53—59. Heb. xiii. 10. It is true, all the gifts and offices which Christ hath bestowed on men are intended for gathering in and edifying that part of his mystical body which is on earth, Eph. iv. 12. but they are placed and exercised in the visible churches of the saints, or sent forth by them. These particular churches are the golden can-



ablesticks among which Christ walks, holding the stars in his right hand, Rev. i. 12, 13, 16, 20. and to them believers are added. Every such church is the body of Christ, i. e. the sign or visible representation of Christ's one body, the church of the redeemed, and the only visible exhibition we have of it in this world.

But Dr. Watt denies, that the phrase *the body of Christ*, is ever applied to a single congregation *as a body*, but only as consisting of *members of the body*, viz. the catholic church: Yet in this he plainly contradicts the Scripture; for the Apostle, having set forth at large the union and communion of the church of Christ with its gifts, under the notion of a living human body and its members, 1 Cor. xii. he thus applies it to the church at Corinth, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular," ver. 27. His argument against this from the word *we* in chap. x. 17. is nothing to the purpose; for the Apostle is there speaking of what was common to all the churches, and so includes himself among them. Dr. Watt affirms, that "The Corinthians were the body of Christ in the same sense as they were members in particular:" But this is to explain the Apostle's words into nonsense, and to make him say, Ye are the body of Christ in the same sense as ye are only parts of it. He next changes *and* into *even*, and says, "The plain sense of the text is, Ye are the body of Christ, *even* members in particular." But this is so far from being its plain sense, that it is much the same with the former, i. e. no sense at all; and to give it the sense he aims at, he should have glossed it thus: Ye, the Corinthian church, are *not* the body of Christ, but only a few particular members of it. He next observes, "That the language is not, Ye are *a* body of Christ, as Mr. B's view would

seem to require, but Ye are *the* body of Christ." But had he consulted the original language, it would have saved him this remark on the English word *the*, for there is nothing answering to it there. It is not το σωμα, *the body*, but simply σωμα, *body*, without the article, which, according to Locke's rule, should be rendered *a body*, and though there are exceptions, there is no occasion for any here, for every visible church of Christ is his body in the same sense as that at Corinth was.

Again, he says, "That *one body*, the organization of which is celebrated by Paul, is that to which were given the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, gifts of healing, &c. These attainments, perhaps, never belonged to any particular society, but to the church-catholic, which is the *one body*," p. 11. I could have wished that he had explained what he means by the *church-catholic*, or *one body*; whether he includes in it those in heaven as well as all those who are yet in their pilgrimage state on earth. If he means only the latter, how can they be termed a *church*, or the *one body* abstract from the former? All the *professors* of the true religion, or even all *real believers* existing at any period in this world, collectively considered, make but a small part of the *one body* of Christ. But passing this, he says, "These attainments," viz. the organization and gifts mentioned, 1 Cor. xii. "perhaps, never belonged to any particular society." But in this he is mistaken; for the particular society at Corinth had actually all the gifts enumerated in ver. 28, 29, 30. and the apostolic gift first, whereby the foundation of it was laid, chap. iii. 6, 10. chap. iv. 15. and by which it was afterwards directed: And there is reason to believe, that these extraordinary gifts, which

have long ago ceased, were in some degree conferred upon every church planted by the apostles ; but they were all for the benefit of the *one* body of Christ, for the sake of which the *visible* churches themselves were appointed. But, besides the miraculous gifts which were peculiar to the apostolic age, there were ordinary gifts and offices, which were necessary to the organization and edification of the churches, which were not to cease ; and this is that organization which Mr. B. pleads for. He farther says, “ But though it were proved, that a particular congregation were called *the body of Christ* in its associated capacity, unless its organization is the *only* reason why it is so designed, the argument will not be aided by the phrase.” This seems to be his favorite mode of reasoning. He has recourse to it in p. 20. where he says, “ To render the argument from the word *pastor* and the term *feeding* of any use, it should be shown, that the expression *feeding* applies *solely* to presiding at the Lord’s Supper ; and also, that feeding is so peculiar to the pastor, that none else may interfere with it.” So here, though he should be obliged, unwillingly, to admit that a particular congregation is called *the body of Christ* ; yet unless its organization is the *only* reason why it is so designed, he thinks it will not aid the argument for the organization of a church. How glaringly perverse is this reasoning ! If a single congregation is called *the body of Christ*, as was the church at Corinth, and if it is compared to the natural body of a man, what idea can he have of such a body, or what instruction can he receive from the comparison if he keep its organization out of view ? We are not obliged to prove that organization is the *only* reason why it is so designed ; it is sufficient for our purpose to show, that the apostle describes the

body he has in view by its organization : for he particularly mentions the different members as placed in the body, their mutual sympathy and care one for another, their various and peculiar gifts and offices, and their unity of design, viz. the good of the whole.

After stating that Mr. B. ascribes two senses to the phrase *the body of Christ*, 1st, The whole church of the redeemed : 2nd, A visible representation of this by a company of believers, as compacted and organized, he, in his usual cavalier style, says, “ I know not where this second sense originated. I suspect it was started by Mr. Glas, or some head of a sect. It has gained currency ; but I cannot find that it has any solid foundation in the word of God.” p. 14. Here he plainly denies, that a particular organized company of believers is ever in the Word termed *the body of Christ*, contrary to 1 Cor. xii. 27. He says, “ That the two senses of the phrase in that Word are, 1st, The whole body of the redeemed : 2nd, Believers considered as members of that body, and as being the materials of which that body is constituted.” That is, a church is termed the body of Christ considered as members or materials of that body ! It is certain that a particular church is not the whole body of the redeemed, and that all the visible churches on earth do not make up the full complement of that one church of Christ which is still in building, and is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all, Eph. i. 22, 23. ch. ii. 21. Nor does this one body include all the members of visible churches ; for hypocrites creep in among them under the disguise of a scriptural profession, some of whom are discovered in this world, and will all at last be disowned by Christ. None of these were ever real members or materials of the one body, though, while



they have that appearance to us, they are to be esteemed and loved as such. And though it is true that all real believers are *members* or materials of Christ's one body; yet, considered under that idea, or as *parts*, they can with no propriety be called *a body* or *the body* of Christ. So that in whatever *sense* a particular visible church is called *the body of Christ*, whether from its being a visible representation of it, or from its own particular union and organization as a body, or from both, it must in *that sense* be considered as a *whole*. And what the apostle calls *members in particular*, are not particular churches, as Dr. Watt affirms, but the particular members of a church, which are described by their different places and offices in the body, such as that of the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, &c. from the variety and union of which results the organization of the whole. But the Doctor, in order to set aside the organization of a particular church, as necessary to its observing the Supper, and that he might accommodate it to two or three individuals, who are incapable of being organized, has denied that it is the body of Christ in any other sense than as it is a part of its materials, and so has confused and obscured one of the most striking, beautiful, and instructive illustrations of the union, communion and order of a church of Christ that is to be found in all the Word of God.

He thinks that "Mr. B's mention of the feeble members, has undone the whole of his argument," p. 13. How so? Did *any part* of his argument, not to say *the whole*, rest upon a denial that there were any feeble members in the body of Christ? Let the reader consult p. 16. of Mr. B's letters, and he will find that the feeble members are much to Mr. B's purpose.

His words are, "It is remarkable, that the most honourable and useful members are declared, by the new plan of forming churches, to be sometimes *unnecessary*, while the Lord himself teacheth us that *those members which seem to be more feeble, are necessary*. Such is the contrast between his judgment and that of his misguided servants. In any other case, one would be apt to say, If the more feeble, and less honourable, and even the uncomely members of a body, are necessary, *much more* are the strong, the honourable, and the seemly; and this reasoning would be held conclusive." Now this is what Dr. Watt says has *undone the whole* of Mr. B's argument!

He affirms, that "although it could be proved that every recorded instance of the Lord's Supper, took place in an organized society, it would not be sufficient to limit the institution which is general," p. 18. I have formerly taken notice of what he calls *the broad ground of unlimited institution*; but what I have particularly in view here, is what he connects with it in the following words: "But Mr. B. himself grants that the case might be as we suppose, owing to the presence of *extraordinary* teachers. Now, he thus virtually adopts a principle, that what churches might do who had extraordinary teachers in them is no rule to us in this case. This principle would have saved him all his pains in proving, that the churches at Corinth, Troas, &c. were organized at all times when they observed this ordinance. It would also destroy the force of example from the apostolic churches altogether, as a guide to us; for extraordinary teachers descended as far down as the scriptural history of the churches descended," p. 19.

It will be proper here to repeat Mr. B's. words: he

says, "For my own part, I will not affirm that societies of Christians, before they obtained elders, did not eat the Lord's Supper, when apostles and other extraordinary teachers, who had the care of all the churches, were present with them: But they could not be said to want elders when those presiding among them were superior to ordinary pastors, and having a general charge, *feed my lambs, feed my sheep*, had power to teach authoritatively, and to preside and rule wherever they went. This therefore, *although it had been expressly declared in the word of God*, would have been the farthest thing imaginable from sanctioning the practice of eating the Lord's Supper without elders."\* Now, is this granting that the case might be as his opponents suppose? If he grants that Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists might administer the Supper, is this the same as to admit that private brethren, and even women, may administer it? Again, how does the virtual adoption of this principle "destroy the force of example from the Apostolic churches altogether, as a guide to us? Is it a principle with Dr. Watt, that nothing done by these extraordinary teachers can be a guide or example to ordinary ones? If "extraordinary teachers descended as far down as the scripture history of the churches descended," does this shew, that no ordinary teachers or pastors were ordained in the churches during all that period, or that it was essential to their office to be possessed of extraordinary gifts? If so, there can be no such thing as any scriptural pastors at this day, as the extraordinary gifts have long ago ceased. Indeed the Doctor's plan will suffer very little by the want of them

\* Braidwood's Letters, p. 79.

for the whole drift of his Essay is to shew of how little use they are as to the organization, order, or government of a church of Christ, or the administration of his ordinances, since two or three may, and ought to do, every thing without them.

Mr. B. considers Matth. xviii. 19, 20. as having a particular respect to discipline, as it stands immediately connected with that subject; and though he denies that it has a literal and immediate respect to any assembly that can justly be called a church, (for which he has good reason from the context, which distinguishes the *two or three* engaged in private discipline, from *the church* to which they are to tell the offence in the last resort;) yet he admits that the spirit of the passage may apply to every lawful assembly of Christians.\* Dr. Watt takes hold of this and says, "This concession destroys his argument; for if the two or three enjoy the spirit of the passage, i. e. the presence of Christ, it is *all* that is pleaded for from this text," p. 7. But this is not the case; he knows that from this text it is pleaded, that two or three are a *church*, which ought to observe the Supper. This is what Mr. B. denies without any concession. At the same time, I think it would have been as well not to have mentioned *discipline* as the particular thing concerning which two of them were to agree on earth to ask, since the promise is general "touching any, (or rather *παντος every*) thing that they shall ask." Yet a *case of discipline* may here be included, and although it were inserted as an explanatory supplement, it would express no tautology, as the Doctor awkwardly attempts to make it by a superfluous repetition of it.

\* Letters, p. 54.



However, upon his plan, he has no occasion to contend from this passage that two or three are a church, as he denies that the Lord's Supper is peculiar to any thing that can be called a *church*, or to its coming together into one place for the joint participation of the symbols of his broken body and shed blood. Two are with him competent to every thing; and as to order or organization, that is out of the question, and has nothing to do with the Lord's Supper.

Many who do not go his length argue in this manner, "Though the Lord's Supper is an ordinance peculiar to a church; yet as the disciples are called a *church* before they had elders, or were set in order, Acts xiv. 23. they might eat the Lord's Supper in that state." To this it may be replied, That the original word *ecclesia* signifies in general a congregation or assembly of any kind, or a multitude of people called out and collected together, whether good or bad, regular or irregular, and whether assembling occasionally or stately; and so it is applied to the confused mob at Ephesus, and rendered *assembly*, Acts xix. 32, 41, and also to a *lawful assembly*, ver. 39. In this general sense of the word it may be applied to a company of disciples not yet set in order, or brought into the form of a regular organized society; yet it may be questioned if ever it is so applied in all the New Testament. And as to their observing the Lord's Supper while in that state, it is a mere supposition, and of which there is not the least hint in all the word of God. The term is repeatedly applied to those in certain houses, see Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xvi. 9. Col. iv. 15. Philem. ver. 2. If these houses contained the whole of a church which met in any of these different cities, and to whom the apostle directs his epistles, then they were organized

churches: But if they contained only such parts of these churches as belonged to a christian house or family, then they were not an organized church by themselves, nor could they eat the Lord's Supper, but by coming together with the whole church for that purpose, and in this respect were organized.

It cannot be shewn that any society of disciples was called a church before it had elders, or such as were more than sufficient to supply their place till they obtained them. The apostles exercised this office in the church at Jerusalem from its beginning, and Peter and John expressly call themselves elders, and could act as such in all churches. The disciples at Antioch are not called the church till Barnabas and Saul assembled themselves with them, Acts xi. 25, 26. And as to the companies of disciples in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, they are not mentioned as churches till the time when Paul and Barnabas ordained them elders. In Crete, where elders were not as yet ordained, they are not termed churches, but Titus was left there to ordain elders in *every city*, i. e. among the disciples in every city, Tit. i. 5. Elders cannot be without a church, in which they are placed; but neither is a church complete in its order, or fully fitted to answer its end without them. Therefore though, according to the general sense of *ecclesia*, there is no impropriety in terming a company of disciples a *church*, previous to their being furnished with office-bearers; yet, in the sacred and appropriate use of that term, the inspired writers seem to avoid applying it to them till they are either set in order, or at the time of their being so.

Dr. Watt seems to have a pretty high opinion of himself for his learning and critical skill in the lan-

guages, not only the Latin, French, and Spanish, but the Greek, Syriac, and Hebrew; and this may account for the supercilious and contemptuous manner in which he treats Mr. B. who pretends to no such acquaintance with these languages. That I have ground for this opinion of him, may appear from his frequently taxing Mr. B. with ignorance, mistakes, and inattention; and after having observed, that the most of his proofs rest on verbal criticisms and figurative expressions, he adds, "Observe also, that those brethren who have been qualified to judge in matters of verbal criticism, have been, and are, in general, opposed to Mr. Braidwood on this point," p. 27. He surely cannot think that the generality of learned men are on his side, and opposed to Mr. B. in this controversy; for he knows the contrary. By men qualified to judge in verbal criticism, therefore, he must mean himself, and two or three more who of late years have embraced the same sentiments; though it does not appear that this has arisen from their superior skill in solid Biblical learning.

It would be exceedingly vain and silly in any of us to vie with Dr. Watt in learning. But while we yield him the palm as to that, we think it would be more to his real honour if he made a less ostentatious display of it, and of his qualifications for verbal criticism, especially as he is not always very correct in his learned explanations of scripture words.

In his Essay on "the covenant of Jehovah with Abraham," he begins with a learned critical explanation of the Hebrew *berith*, and the Greek *diatheke*, which our translators render *covenant*, and sometimes *testament*. "*Berith*," he says, "literally applies to *cutting*, and may express either the same idea as

*intersection, division, and separation, or be equivalent to pattern, form, or shape, viz. made by cutting."* Now, though I cannot pretend to Dr. Watt's knowledge of the Hebrew, yet I can learn from my lexicon, that *berith* does not signify *cutting* at all. The Hebrew phrase for *making a covenant* is *carath berith*, which signifies *to cut a covenant*, so that it is not *berith* that signifies *to cut*, but *carath*. How a Hebrew critic should fall into this glaring mistake is not easily accounted for; and it may lead some to suspect that he knows little or nothing of the Hebrew. As to *berith*, which we render *covenant*, it is derived from a root which signifies *to purify*; answerable to this it sometimes signifies *soap*, Jer. ii. 22. Mal. iii. 2. and so the Hebrew phrase *carath berith* literally signifies *to cut a purifier*, or to cut off a purifying victim, alluding to the ancient manner of making a covenant upon sacrifice, Gen. xv. 10, 18. Exod xxiv. 8. Psal. l. 5. Jer. xxxiv. 18, 19.

The Greek translation of *berith* is *diatheke*, which, he says, "literally applies to what is *set between*, or *interposed*, and expresses nearly the same literal idea as the words *interposal, interposition, or intercourse*." But whatever be the etymological sense of *diatheke* (of *dia* and *tithemi*) the LXX paid no other regard to that than as they found it the fittest word to express the usual sense of the Hebrew *berith*, and to have aimed at any thing else would have been pernicious pedantry. He gives many other senses to the word *covenant*, as that "it may literally refer to *commerce*, but more likely to *coming together, or convening*." All these, he says, "may be viewed as nearly equivalent," and then gives this mathematical demonstration of it, "for the *point* or *line* at which objects meet, is



the point or line of their intersection or division." So that from this hint we may learn that he has been studying Euclid. But he has not yet exhausted his catalogue of senses; for he says, "The general idea which will suit all these cases, and all the texts in which the words occur, may well be expressed by the term *project*, or *plan of intercourse*," &c.

Now I ask the reader, whether, from all these different and even opposite senses, (which, with the Doctor are all one) his mind is in any degree enlightened as to the nature of "the covenant of Jehovah with Abraham?" Or whether, on the contrary, they have not confused and perplexed him? But the Doctor hates the *confined use* of words; it does not suit his learned and enlarged ideas; and by his fertile talent at coining a variety of senses, he can easily explain the Word of God into any sense he thinks proper.

I shall only farther observe, that he is not very scrupulous at using unwarrantable freedoms with the Word of God when it serves to display his enlarged mind, and emancipation from popular trammels. In his *Key to the Song of Solomon*, he boldly denies that it has any reference to Christ and his church\*. And in shewing how Paul became to the Jew as a Jew, he says, "He employed the circumstances of their religion, and perhaps even their *prejudices*, for the purpose of leading them to Christ." "A most eminent illustration of this," he says, "is given in the epistle to the Hebrews; and what in that epistle appears most striking, is his application of the Levitical service and Aaronical priesthood to his purpose †."

\* Edinburgh Evangelical Mag. vol. ii. p. 54, 59.

† Edinb. Evang. Mag. vol. ii. p. 145.

If this principle is admitted, it will not be easy to determine when the apostle, in that epistle, is writing according to the truth of things, or, only according to Jewish prejudices.

I am sorry to have had occasion for these Strictures, which might be greatly enlarged: It is a task very disagreeable to me, and especially to be laid under the necessity of publishing them: But as Dr. Watt has violated every rule of christian discipline and brotherly love, by a most uncandid appeal to the public, and also by dispersing printed letters among the churches in the connection, containing perverse things, with a view to foment divisions, and draw away disciples after him; in these circumstances, I had no choice left, but to meet him in the same public manner in which he has made the attack. I have little expectation that any thing I have said, or can say, however clearly supported by the Word of God, will make any impression upon him, though the Lord is able to change his mind, and to convince him of the guilt of his present conduct, which is producing such desolating effects among the churches. But if the foregoing pages should be blest for establishing those who are wavering, or for recovering any of our beloved brethren who have been led aside by his sophistry, my end is gained, and for this I earnestly pray.

**LETTERS**

**ON**

**IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.**





ON  
**Disinterested Love to God ;**

AND THE

*Principle of Fear considered as a Motive to Obedience.*

[In a Letter to a Friend.]



DEAR SIR,

I HAVE been busily employed in writing several long letters since I received yours, and I now answer you in your turn.

I never blamed you for being attached to the *scripture system* of divine truth, but for attending too much to *human writings* and systems. A favorite preconceived system in a man's mind, is like a mould, which gives its own form to all his conceptions of the word of God, and hinders him from attending to the form of sound words in their own native connexion and simplicity. You will never make much progress in the knowledge of the Scriptures, till you are convinced the Bible is a plain book in every thing essential, and can risk yourself entirely upon it as able to make the simple wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus ; and until you are bold enough to abide by its plain and simple meaning, in opposition to the most renowned authorities for orthodoxy.

There cannot be a clearer instance of your mind being warped with human systems, than the description you give of a true christian, viz. "One who by faith rests on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, as his

justifying righteousness, and in this rest does every piece of commanded duty, *without being influenced either by the fear of hell, or the hope of heaven.*" The first part of this description I admit, taking justification in Paul's sense, Rom. iii. but from whence did you learn the last part of it? Not from the word of God, for that sets before christians, both the hope of heaven to encourage them in duty, and the terrors of hell to deter them from sin, or to alarm them when they fall into it. Can a true christian then disregard both? I grant that when christians are in heaven, they have no occasion to hope for that which they have in possession, nor yet to fear hell, of which they are in no more danger. But while in this imperfect state of trial and temptation, they need to be stimulated to their duty, both by the rewards and punishments of a future state. The Lord saw this to be necessary, and therefore hath set both these motives before them in his word. I grant also, that as hope prevails, its opposite, fear, must subside, and that the full assurance of hope and perfect love casteth out tormenting fear, and which is inconsistent with the spirit of adoption, 1 John iv. 18. Rom. viii. 15, 16. Yet, even in this case, there is a fear of hell which hath no torment, and which answers in the spiritual life to the principle of self-preservation in the natural. This principle does not in ordinary cases give torment, but makes us cautious to avoid every thing we apprehend to be hurtful. When I see a coach coming up on the street, I step aside to let it pass, and feel my mind quite composed and easy; yet on examining my motive for getting out of the way, I find it was no less than the fear of being rode down, or perhaps trode to death. This fear is absolutely necessary to the very preservation of life, and yet in ordi-

nary cases gives a man very little uneasiness. It is equally necessary, and still more important in the spiritual life, and perfectly consistent with happiness of mind and peace with God. Adam had the fear of death set before him, whilst he was both holy and happy, Gen. ii. 17. this fear was very consistent with his present enjoyment of God's favour, and tended to preserve that enjoyment; and happy had it been for him and his posterity, had he been more under its influence. But there are certain cases which require that this fear should be awakened to a very high, and even a painful degree. Christians may leave their first love, and grow lukewarm; in others the things which remain may be ready to die; in short, their relish for divine things may in a great measure subside, and their love of this present world may gain ground; and all this may be accompanied with insensibility, and a kind of false ease and security of mind. To take comfort in this situation, from the doctrine of election, the perseverance of the saints, their former attainments, their being once in Christ, and so always in Christ, because God's love to them is unchangeable, and his promises faithful, would be only fostering themselves in presumption, and hardening their hearts in carnal security; and therefore the scripture beats them off from all these refuges, and tells christians roundly, that if they deny Christ, he will also deny them; that if they believe not, yet he abideth faithful, and cannot deny himself, 2 Tim. ii. 12, 13. And that if any man draw back, God's soul shall have no pleasure in him, Heb. x. 38. It sets before them the danger, and awful consequences of apostacy, ver. 26--32. in order to alarm their fears, and renew them again unto repentance. Thus it is that God keeps his people from totally

falling away, by a seasonable application of the motive of fear as well as hope.

But the only principle of obedience you approve of, is pure *disinterested love*, without being influenced either by *hope* or *fear*. Now hereby you raise a christian above the state of a dependent creature, who derives all his happiness from God. Did we possess independent happiness in and of ourselves, we might, in that case, love God *disinterestedly*, purely for what he is in himself, because we could have nothing to hope or fear from him. God necessarily loves his own happiness; but he holds it of none, and therefore his love to his creatures must be disinterested. It is also essential to our being to love our own happiness, but we derive it all from God, and therefore cannot love him disinterestedly; for it is essential to our dependent state to be under *interested obligations* to love him, as the source of our being and happiness. We cannot love (however much we may approve of) his perfections, till we have some ground to hope they are engaged in our behalf. In any other view the necessary love of our own happiness makes us averse to them. The noblest principle of obedience enjoined in scripture is *gratitude*, which is not disinterested love, but arises from benefits received or expected. In short, if we love God at all it must be *because he first loved us*, i. e. because we either have, or expect happiness from him.—You may call this *selfish and mercenary*, if you will; but the Spirit of God approves of this principle of obedience in the highest manner, and states it as an effect of faith. Abraham was influenced in his obedience by the prospect of the heavenly country, and the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, Heb. xi. 10, 16. Moses



despised all the pomp of Egypt, and pleasures of sin, and preferred the reproach of Christ to them, because *he had respect unto the recompence of the reward*, ver. 24—27. The Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, because they knew in themselves they had in heaven a better and enduring substance, chap. x. 34. Christ frequently encourages his disciples, both in obedience and sufferings, by the promise of a *great reward in heaven*, Matth. v. 11, 12. ch. x. 42. Luke xiv. 14. The apostles were constrained by *Christ's love* to live unto him, 2 Cor. v. 14—16. Paul pressed toward the mark for the *prize* of his high-calling, Phil. iii. 14. And Christ himself *for the joy that was set before him*, endured the cross, despising the shame, Heb. xii. 2. It would be needless to quote any more to this purpose ; the scripture is full of such motives and examples.

With respect to *fear*, you admit of none but the fear of *sin*, and of temporal *corrections*, such as those threatened against David's natural transgressing seed, who were to succeed him on the throne, Psal. lxxxix. 30—34. but even this, you say, “ if it influence to duty is mercenary and selfish.” That we should have “ a fear of offending a holy and gracious Father in Christ, and of ungratefully acting towards him,” I heartily admit, and think we can never exceed in it ; but this is not a disinterested fear ; it arises from gratitude for the love bestowed upon us, and the sense of obligation arising therefrom. The fear of temporal corrections may likewise be admitted, see 1 Cor. xi. 30. Rev. iii. 19. though they are not much insisted on in this view under the New Testament, but as an evidence of God's peculiar love, which we ought neither to despise nor faint under, seeing they are for our profit, Heb. xii.

5—12. But there is a more awful consequence of sin than this set before us in scripture, as an object of fear, when the other, perhaps, would have very little effect, viz. the *fear of hell* or misery in a future state, but this fear you altogether explode as unsuitable to a christian, in any case or in any degree, if I mistake not. I shall therefore lay before you a few texts out of many, which hold forth this motive of fear to christians.—Our Lord commands his disciples to pluck out a right eye, and cut off a right hand, by this argument, that it is better for them to do so, than “that their whole body should be cast into hell,” Matth. v. 29, 30. chap. xviii. 8, 9.—In opposition to the fear of man, he exhorts his apostles to “fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell,” chap. x. 28. Here it is evident, that the fear of God includes in it such a fear of hell, as overbalances the fear of temporal punishment from men.—The apostle, speaking of the rejection of old Israel, draws this awful caution from it to awaken the *fears* and beat down the high-mindedness of believers, “Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. *Be not high-minded, but fear.* For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed lest he also spare not thee.* Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them who fell severity; but towards thee goodness, *if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off,*” Rom. xi. 20, 21, 22. The cautious fear here enjoined is not a fear of mere fatherly correction, but of God’s *severity* in cutting off such as through unbelief continue not in his goodness, which must be the fear of hell, for he that believeth not shall be damned. He warns the Corinthians from wronging and defrauding one another, by this consideration,

“that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” and he bids them *not be deceived* with any contrary thought, 1 Cor. vi. 9. I know no medium between inheriting the kingdom of God, and being cast into hell. He urges the Hebrews to give the more earnest heed to the things which they had heard, lest at any time they should let them slip ; from this consideration, that it was impossible for them to escape if they neglected so great salvation, Heb. ii. 1—4. and having set before them the awful example of Israel, in the wilderness, who fell through unbelief, and came short of the promised rest, he exhorts them to “fear, lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of them should seem to come short of it ; and to labour to enter into that rest, lest any of them fall after the same example of unbelief,” chap. iv. 1, 11. Is he exhorting them only to fear temporal correction, and to labour to enter into an earthly rest ? No ; The rest is the eternal inheritance, chap. ix. 15. and to come short of that *rest*, is to be punished with *everlasting destruction*, (see 2 Thess. i. 7—10.) and so he describes the punishment of those who draw back from the faith, to be *fiery indignation* which shall *devour* them as *adversaries*, chap. x. 27. Innumerable are the texts which might be quoted to show, that the fear of hell is one motive of the christian obedience ; but if you can turn off these plain texts already mentioned, it would be in vain to attempt to convince you by scripture.

If it be asked, How can such passages be reconciled with the doctrine of election, the unchangeableness of God’s love, his faithfulness to his promise, the assurance of our interest in Christ, &c. ? I answer,

1. That though I could not reconcile them with these doctrines, yet still I should believe them reconcilable ;

because, as there can be no doubt as to their meaning, so it is equally certain they are the words of inspiration, and so must be true and consistent with every other part of revelation. If I cannot perceive the consistency, let me freely own my ignorance; but let me never presume to explain away the word of God, under pretence of reconciling it. But

2. I apprehend these passages may very well be reconciled with the above points.

The general doctrine of *election* is clearly revealed in scripture; but no man can know his own *particular* election, but in believing and obeying the gospel; for that is the evidence of it. Men are *chosen* unto salvation through *sanctification* of the Spirit and *belief* of the truth, 2 Thess. ii. 13. They are *elect*, not only according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, but also through *sanctification* of the Spirit unto *obedience*, and *sprinkling* of the blood of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 2. As therefore election cannot be known but by its effects, there is room left for every man to give all *diligence* to make his calling and election *sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. and in doing these things he is assured he shall *never fall*; but if he remits that *diligence*, the evidence of his election is proportionably weakened; so that there is still room for cautious fear, as a spur to that diligence, whereby he obtains and preserves the knowledge of his election.

God's *love* to his elect is *unchangeably* the same in *itself*, but not so in its *manifestation* and *manner* of exercise towards the changeable objects of it. The motives of hope and fear, are the two great stimulatives to duty in this imperfect state, and his love is exercised in making each of them produce their proper effect, as circumstances require; whilst the end he in-



variably pursues in both is the salvation of their souls. If he make all things, even things of an opposite nature, work together for their good, does this argue that he is changeable in his love?

He is also *faithful* to his promise of salvation to him that believeth; but no person can know his own salvation by this promise, any farther than he is at present holding fast the faith and influenced by it. It is not a promise that he shall be saved at any rate, whether he believe and continue in the faith or not. On the contrary, God hath declared, that he that believeth not shall be damned; and that his soul shall have no pleasure in him that draweth back from the faith. Should we therefore think of denying him, we must also think, that if we do so, he also will most assuredly deny us, and yet *abide faithful* to all his promises notwithstanding, 2 Tim. ii. 12, 13.—The apostle is so far from cutting out cautious fear by the promise, that he connects both together, “Let us therefore *fear* lest a *promise* being left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it,” Heb. iv. 1.—The promise is not to him that *for a while believeth*, like the stony ground hearers, Luke viii. 13. but to him that endureth to the end, Matt. x. 22. abideth in Christ, John xv. 6, 7. continueth in God’s goodness, Rom. xi. 12. continueth in the faith grounded and settled, and is not moved away from the hope of the gospel, Col. i. 23. that lives by faith, and does not draw back unto perdition, Heb. x. 38. The apostle thus exhorts the believing Hebrews, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,” and uses this argument, “for he is *faithful that promised*,” Heb. x. 24. yet in connection, and in a perfect consistency with this, he tells them, “if we sin

wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries," ver. 26, 27. God's promise therefore still leaves open a door for cautious fear upon all proper occasions, without any impeachment of his *faithfulness*.

The final *perseverance* of the saints is also consistent with this fear. God keeps them by his power through faith unto salvation; and this faith apprehends the motives of fear as well as hope, Heb. xi. 7. Fear is one of the methods whereby he hedges in their way, and also reclaims them when they have gone astray, Jude, ver. 23. Rev. iii. 8. It is an ingredient, in that fear of him which he puts in their heart, that they may not finally depart from him, Jer. xxxii. 40.

This cautious fear likewise consists with the *assurance* of our interest in Christ. The scripture assures every one that believes, of his interest in Christ, and salvation by him. Of this he may be as sure as he is that he truly believeth in him. But the scripture gives no man such an absolute assurance of salvation, as to make him think he is quite secure from future misery, independent of his keeping the faith and abiding in Christ, John xv. 6. nor has he ground to think, that God will keep him by his power in any other way. A man who has escaped perishing in the waters, may contemplate with joy his deliverance, and find himself secure from drowning whilst he abides on firm land; but this security will not make him less cautious of falling again into the deep, or less afraid that he would perish if he did so. An assurance which utterly excludes a cautious fear of sin, and its awful consequences, would be very unsuitable to our present state

of imperfection and trial. It comports not with the christian life, which is compared to a *warfare*, wherein circumspection, vigilance, sobriety, and vigorous exertion are necessary to detect the stratagems, and repel the attacks of the enemy, lest we be overcome, Eph. vi. 10—19. 2 Tim. ii. 3—6. 1 Pet. v. 8, 9. It is also compared to a *race*, wherein if we would so run as to obtain the prize, we must be temperate in all things, and lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, 1 Cor. ix. 25. Heb. xii. 1. Paul himself, who had the highest assurance that any can pretend to in this world, was not without the influence of cautious fear, both in fighting and running, lest that by any means, when he had preached the gospel to others, he himself should be a cast-away, (αδοκίμος) unapproved, rejected, and so fail of the prize, 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27. He had the most assured hope that he should obtain the prize, in that course which he was pursuing, (see it described, Phil. iii. 7—15.) but he had every thing to fear, should he go back or turn aside from it; he therefore laboured, that whether present or absent, he might be accepted of Christ in the judgment, 2 Cor. v. 9, 10. and so every christian is exhorted to be diligent, that they may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless, 2 Pet. iii. 14. and that they may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming, 1 John ii. 28. I shall illustrate this by two plain examples. Noah and his family were assured of salvation in the ark, and it would have been sinful in them in the least to doubt it; nay, they had the distinguishing enjoyment of present salvation there, whilst the whole world were swallowed up in the flood; but then, it behoved them at the same time to know, that if they abode not in the ark, they


would as certainly perish. So, abiding in Christ we have the strongest assurance of salvation ; but then, it is only in him ; we must therefore take heed, lest there be in us an evil heart of unbelief, departing from him. Again, when Paul and the rest in the ship were likely to be lost, the Lord absolutely *determined* that none of them should perish—he positively *promised* to Paul that they all should escape, Acts xxvii. 24. But though Paul *believed* God, that it should be even as he had told him, ver. 25. yet he thought it very consistent with this belief to tell them afterwards, “ Except these abide in the ship *ye cannot be saved*,” ver. 31.—Whilst God gave them *assurance* of safety in his own way, he gave them as certain grounds to *fear* they should perish in any other way ; and this fear was the means of their safety, by making them *abide* in the ship. The application is easy.

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ON THE

## Universal Restoration Scheme.



DEAR SIR,

AT our last interview, you requested to have my thoughts on Rom. viii. 19—24. Though I have little hope that my opinion of that passage will be of any service to you, yet I believe I gave you ground to expect it; but the conversation I had with you and Mr. S. fully convinced me that it would be to no purpose, as “The Universal Restoration of the creature” is not the only point upon which we differ; and as I plainly perceived you were less disposed to receive instruction from me, than to disseminate your principles, which in my opinion are little short of avowed infidelity, and directly lead to it; I therefore did not consider it as useful to have any more correspondence on the subject, as it could produce nothing but vain jangling.

With regard to the passage above mentioned, though I should not be able to give a clear and satisfactory explanation of it, that would be no proof that your view of it is right, or that it in the least favours your sentiments. I never pretended to understand every passage in the word of God; but I hold it firmly as a principle, that the word of God is consistent with itself, and that no explanation of a difficult passage can be right if it contradict a number of other plain passages, as your view of this evidently does. But though Paul in his epistles has written some things

hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction, (2 Pet. iii. 16.) yet I think what he says in Rom. viii. 19—24. is not so hard to be understood, but that it may be explained in a perfect consistency with himself, and with the other scriptures. I shall therefore offer a few general remarks upon it.

1. It is evident that the apostle is speaking of *that time* when the whole frame of creation shall be renovated, and when the saints shall be raised from the dead and glorified. For it is the time when the Spirit of him that raised up Christ, shall also *quicken their mortal bodies*, ver. 11. when they shall obtain the adoption for which they wait, namely, *the redemption of their body*, ver. 23. and when that glory shall be revealed in them, with which the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared, ver. 17, 18.

2. In the whole of this passage the apostle says nothing of the resurrection or future glory of the wicked and finally impenitent. He speaks only of the resurrection and glory of the saints, or the *manifestation of the sons of God*, ver. 19. whom he describes as in Christ Jesus, walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit, ver. 1. as spiritually minded, having the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, ver. 6, 9. as the sons of God, who are led by his Spirit, and have the spirit of adoption witnessing with their spirit that they are the children of God, and so heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, and who shall be glorified together with him, ver. 14—18. It is for the manifestation of the *sons of God* as thus described, that the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth, ver. 19. but not a syllable is here said of unbelievers who die impenitent.

True indeed, we read elsewhere that they also shall be raised from the dead, but it is not in glory, nor to receive glory, but to everlasting shame and contempt, Dan. xii. 2. it is unto the resurrection of damnation, John v. 29. for they shall then be sentenced to everlasting punishment, Matt. xxv. 41, 46. and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, 2 Thess. i. 9. So that this passage cannot have the least respect to their restoration to a better state; for the manifestation of the sons of God, for which the creature waiteth, takes place at that very time when the wicked shall be sentenced and go away into everlasting punishment, and there the scripture leaves them. Let us now consider,

3. What is meant by the *creature*, or the *whole creation*, which is represented as earnestly expecting, groaning and travailing in pain together until now. Though the *whole creation* is an universal expression, yet it must be limited by the scope of the passage, the nature of the subject spoken of, and the harmony of divine truth, otherwise we shall make sad havoc of the scriptures in explaining a vast number of universal expressions. It appears that the wicked are not included in the expression *the whole creation*; for though they are part of the creation, and are groaning under the miseries introduced by sin; yet they are not groaning for deliverance from sin itself, which is their delight, nor are they earnestly expecting or wishfully *waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God*, whom they hate: Nor shall they then be brought into the *glorious liberty of the children of God*, but go away into everlasting punishment; therefore they are not the *creature* or *whole creation* here spoken of, and

of whom these things are said, ver. 19, 21. Nor does it appear that by the *creature* or *whole creation* the saints are intended; for the apostle evidently distinguishes the one from the other in these words, "And not only" *they* (or *it*, i. e. the whole creation) "but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves (viz. the saints) groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body," ver. 23. Here we see that Paul and all the saints, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, are distinguished from what he terms *the whole creation*, and are represented as joining with it in groaning and waiting for the day of redemption.

It will now be asked, What then is meant by the *creature* or *whole creation*, if it include neither the wicked nor the righteous? To this I answer; that by the *whole creation* here I understand, the whole material frame or system of creation, particularly this lower world, which was fitted up as a convenient habitation for man, and furnished with every thing necessary to his comfort and happiness, who was constituted lord over it, and designed to glorify God by it. But man by his apostacy from God drew off the whole creation with him, and perverted every thing from its original end. Some of the creatures of God he abused as objects of worship, others of them he applied to the gratification of his corrupt lusts and passions, and all of them he turned into means and instruments of rebellion against his Maker. Thus the whole creation, as it stood connected with man, was perverted and polluted by his sin, to the dishonour of God. Therefore, not only man himself fell under the curse and was subject to death, Gen. iii. 19. but the very ground was cursed for his sake, ver. 17. ch. v. 29



The delights of Paradise were withdrawn, and the face and constitution of nature was changed from its pristine beauty and fertility. Thus the apostle says, "The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly," (or of its own choice) "but by reason of him who hath subjected the same," ver. 20. It was for the sin of man that the curse came upon the creature, and that God subjected it to vanity. And this vanity imports also its changeable state, and even its dissolution. So the first world, "being overflowed with water perished," 2 Pet. iii. 6. and "the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men"—"Then the heavens" (*i. e.* the ærial heavens) "shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up," ver. 7, 10. Thus it was by the sin of man that the *creature*, nay, the whole frame of the visible creation was subjected to vanity and dissolution.

But then it was subject to this vanity "in hope, that the creation itself also" (as well as the saints) "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God," ver. 21. This hope is the hope of the saints respecting the restoration and renovation of the creature, and is formed on the promise of God, as Peter observes, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," 2 Pet. iii. 13. As the bodies of the saints shall die because of sin, (Rom. viii. 10.) and be raised again glorious and immortal; so the present heavens and earth which are subjected to vanity for the sin of man, and shall be dis-

solved, shall also be restored and renovated into a state analogous to the risen bodies of the saints, and as a fit habitation for them. This new creation shall no more be polluted with, or made subservient to the sins of men, or made subject to change or dissolution, but will be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God who dwell therein, and are all righteous. This is that state for which the creature is said to be earnestly expecting and waiting.

4. It will perhaps be asked, How can the inanimate creation be said to expect, wait, groan, and travail in pain together? I answer, by a figure of speech very common in Scripture, which we call a *prosopopeia* or personification, whereby inanimate things are spoken of as if they were persons, and were endowed with human reason, passions, and feelings. Thus the earth is said to mourn—the little hills to rejoice on every side, and the pastures and the vallies to shout for joy and sing, Psal. lxx. 12, 13. Thus also heaven and earth, and seas, and fields, and woods are called upon to rejoice before the Lord, Psal. xcvi. 11—13. The apostle therefore, by a noble and sublime figure of speech, represents the whole creation as if, conscious of its present degraded state and expecting a better, it were groaning and travailling in pain, like a woman in labour, to obtain deliverance.

The saints are also represented as joining the whole creation in their present burthens and sufferings, and as waiting for a better state, ver. 23. What the whole creation do figuratively, they do literally. They *have the first fruits of the Spirit*, which is the earnest of their inheritance, being the pledge, evidence, and foretaste of it, Eph. i. 14. ch. iv. 30. for it is the

Spirit of their adoption as heirs of God: Yet notwithstanding their spiritual enjoyments and present attainments, they *groan within themselves* for deliverance from the natural and moral imperfections of this present state, and from the troubles and mortality to which they are subject, 2 Cor. v. 6. They *wait for the adoption*, viz. the redemption of their body from the grave. They look for the Saviour, from heaven, to change the body of their humiliation, and fashion it like unto his glorious body, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, and they shall be ever with the Lord.

Thus I have given you, what appears to me, the sense of this passage; and though in some particulars I should not exactly have hit the meaning, yet I am confident that no part of it has any respect to the restoration of the wicked after a temporary punishment; for the time here referred to is when the saints shall be raised from the dead and glorified, at which period the punishment of the wicked commences, and there is no after period mentioned, either here or any where else in scripture, when they shall be restored to happiness. We cannot consistently believe the scriptures, that eternal happiness awaits the righteous, unless we also believe the same scriptures that eternal misery awaits the wicked; and all arguing against this is vain and foolish; and it would be far more consistent to give up with the scriptures altogether, than to wrest them where they clash with our favourite notions.

I am, &c.

**ON THE EXTENT**  
OF  
**ADAM'S FIRST TRANSGRESSION.**

[To Mr. R. Moncreiff.]



MY DEAR BROTHER,

I RECEIVED your favour of the 10th inst. wherein you desire my thoughts on the extent of Adam's sin as to those who shall be *eternally damned*. I am not sure that the Scripture makes any distinction betwixt the damned and the saved as to the extent of Adam's sin. Wherever the Scripture speaks expressly of the extent and effects of Adam's sin, it is particularly with respect to the saved, see Rom. v. and 1 Cor. xv. And wherever it speaks of eternal damnation, it assigns another reason for it than Adam's one offence. I admit the principle, that a *personal* sin against the eternal law of love to God, infers the desert of eternal punishment in the very nature of things; but this inference cannot so clearly be drawn from *imputed* sin. Imputation, in the sense commonly taken, is purely an act of the sovereign *will* of the supreme lawgiver, and to which he is no way obliged from any *necessity of nature*, or eternal *indispensable justice*; and therefore he may either not impute the sin of another at all, or to what *degree* or *extent* he pleases. Before therefore we can affirm that any are eternally damned *purely* for Adam's one offence, we must have express scripture for it; because it will not arise from the nature of



things, however heinous we may suppose that one offence to be. I am not very fond of differing from commonly received opinions without great necessity; I shall, however, at your desire, lay before you a few hints upon the subject with modesty and diffidence, rather with a view of being instructed by your corrections, than of proselyting you to my particular views.

The apostle expressly says that Adam was the *type* of him that was to come, Rom. v. 14. Now as every type must fall infinitely short of its antitype, so does Adam fall short of Christ in all the respects wherein he typified him; and there are some respects wherein he could not typify him at all; for the type is never fully commensurate to its antitype, so as to answer to it in all points. It is sufficient that it bear some striking resemblance to some of the leading outlines of its antitype, though it should not exhibit the very image of it. Farther, the difference betwixt type and antitype does not lie simply in *degree*, but also in *kind* or *nature*, such as is betwixt earth and heaven, flesh and spirit, &c. and such is the difference in the present case; "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam a quickening spirit—the first natural, or animal; the last spiritual—the first man was of the earth, earthy: the second the Lord from heaven." 1 Cor. xv. 45—47. If such was the difference betwixt Adam (even in his original state) and Christ, there must be as wide a disproportion betwixt them in their representative capacities. The popular scheme exalts Adam almost to an equality with Christ in this respect. It makes the earthly state in which he was created almost equal to the heavenly state, and his obedience of equal consequence to his posterity as the obedience of Christ; and in consequence of this, his *sin*, and the

*death* thereby entailed upon his seed, are made the *full* and *adequate opposites* of Christ's *obedience*, and the justification and *life* resulting from it. According to this scheme, I am at a loss to perceive the disparity betwixt them stated by the apostle, Rom. v. 15—17. In entering upon this passage I would observe, that the apostle is not stating a comparison betwixt the *blessings* we have lost by Adam, and those procured by Christ; but he is stating a contrast betwixt the *judgment, condemnation* and *death* which come upon us by Adam's one offence, and the *justification* and *life* which come unto us by the one obedience of Christ. These he shows are perfectly *similar* in their *manner of conveyance* to us, the one being for an offence we never committed, and the other for an obedience we never performed: But as to their *nature* or *degree* he makes a very wide difference, and shows that the former is not at all commensurate or the adequate opposite of the latter. If the death which comes by Adam's one offence were eternal damnation, then I ask,

1. How could the apostle say, that such a death *reigned from Adam to Moses*, ver. 14. not only over infants, but also over Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; nay actually *passed* (εἰς) *unto all men*? ver. 12. It is evident he is there speaking of the death which came by Adam in the same sense in which he speaks of it through the rest of that chapter. It is also plain he is not speaking of death in a mystical or figurative sense, such as a *spiritual* or *moral* death in sin; for he distinguishes here betwixt *death* and *sin* as the *effect* is distinguished from its *cause*, or the *crime* from its *punishment*. He distinguishes betwixt the *sin* which was in the world until the law, and the *death* which

reigned from Adam to Moses, ver. 13, 14. which therefore cannot be the same. So that *death* here does not mean *sin* either in heart or life. Neither is he speaking simply of men falling under the *sentence* of death, and becoming *liable* to it, but of the actual *execution* of the sentence ; for he says death *reigned over* and *passed unto all* men. Are all men actually and eternally damned by Adam's sin ? God forbid !

2. He shows that many *have died* (απεθανον) the death which came by Adam, who notwithstanding *shall reign in life* by Jesus Christ, ver. 15, 17. He does not say merely that they *deserved* death, or were *under its sentence*, but that they *have died*, death *passed unto them*, and *reigned over them*. Now if this were eternal death, how could he affirm that the very same persons *shall reign in life* by Jesus Christ ? The sentence indeed might be reversed, and the punishment remitted ; but if once inflicted, as is affirmed of this death, there could be no deliverance from it, if it were eternal.

3. According to this doctrine, how could the apostle say, “ Not as the offence, so also is the free gift ”—i. e. the *effect* of the offence, which is death, is not adequate to the free gift of justification and eternal life. That this is the sense is clear from the words immediately following—“ for if through the offence of one many *have died* ; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many,” ver. 15. Certainly eternal death is the adequate opposite to eternal life. Upon this plan the offence would be fully commensurate in its effects to the free gift, and there would be no room for saying that the gift by grace was (πολλω μαλλον) *much more* abundant. This superabundance does not lie in the *number* of the saved ; for more were condemned in

Adam than shall be saved by Christ. It must therefore lie in the *nature* and *degree* of the grace and gift conferred upon the saved, and plainly intimates that the condemnation by Adam's one offence is not so great as the salvation by Christ, which it would surely be if it were eternal death.

4. Lastly, upon this plan how could the apostle say, "And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by one (*viz.* offence) to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification," ver. 16 Here is a distinction made betwixt Adam's *one offence* and the *many offences* of his posterity. Had Adam's offence been adequate to Christ's obedience, then that obedience could only have justified from the *one offence*, and there would be nothing to answer for, or oppose to the *many offences* which the elect themselves have personally committed. But the apostle is here setting forth the infinite merit and efficacy of Christ's obedience to save, above that of Adam's one offence to condemn, by this, that it frees not only from the effects of that *single offence*, but from the effects of the *many offences*. Now, if the judgment by the one offence was everlasting condemnation, what additional condemnation does the many offences bring? There may indeed be *higher degrees* of torment in a future state; but is this the only circumstance the apostle has in his eye in mentioning the many offences? Does he enhance the obedience of Christ above the offence of Adam merely from this consideration, that it saves from some greater degree of hell's torment than we have incurred by Adam? Surely the opposition intended must be much wider than this. The superabundance of the merits of Christ's obedience, and the free gift of justification and life thereby, ap-



pears from the apostle's reasoning to stand thus.—It justifies not only from Adam's *one offence*, but also from our own *many personal offences*.—It recovers not only from the *death* pronounced upon the one offence, and *which hath passed unto all men*, but redeems from the *wrath to come* or *second death*, which is the penalty of the many offences. It restores us not only to the *happy life in Paradise* which Adam forfeited; but raises us far above the terrestrial state in its highest perfection, to reign in *eternal life, glory* and *happiness* with Christ in *heaven*. To illustrate this a little farther, I would observe

1. That natural death is never ascribed to the many offences as it is to the one offence. The destruction of the old world by the deluge, of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven, and the death inflicted upon Israel for their disobedience to the law, was not indeed *simply* the *natural* death which all men are appointed to die, Heb. ix. 27. but also a *violent* death, as a just recompense of reward for their own sins; yet the death which came by Adam's sin was also included in it; for this they were previously liable to, and behoved to suffer at any rate.

2. The second death is never, that I can recollect, connected *immediately* with Adam's one offence. The original curse pronounced upon Adam's sin, was the toils, troubles and miseries of this life, and his returning to the dust from whence he was taken, Gen. iii. 17—19. The New Testament does not seem to state it in any other light. I have already considered Rom. v. the only other place is 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The apostle is upon the resur-

rection of the body of the saints, and shews that this resurrection is from the death which came by Adam. Now what kind of death is that from which there is a resurrection? The apostle is not speaking of a *spiritual* death and resurrection, but of the death and resurrection of the *body*, which was the point in question; far less is he speaking of the *second death*, for that is *posterior* to the resurrection of the wicked: besides there is no resurrection from the second death, as the apostle affirms of this.

3. The second death or eternal misery is always threatened against the many offences which men commit themselves. See Matth. xxv. 41—44. Rom. ii. 5—12. Heb. x. 26—31. 2 Pet. ii. 9. It is those who have *done evil* that shall come forth unto the resurrection of condemnation, and it is upon the deeds *done in the body* that the final judgment proceeds, 2 Cor. v. 10. Rev. xx. 21.

It is certain that Adam by his sin lost for a while the sense of the divine favour, which constituted the true happiness of his life, in distinction from that of the brutes, and that he was filled with shame, fear and dread. It is also certain that all his posterity derive a corrupt nature from him, whereby they are alienated from the life of God. Yet I do not find the scripture calling either of these the *death which came by Adam*. It appears to me that upon this subject the scripture speaks of death in the plainest and most obvious sense, even a privation of that breath of life whereby Adam became a living soul, Gen. ii. 7. But as some think he must have died in some other sense, the very day he sinned, otherwise the threatening would not be made good, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," Gen. ii. 17. I answer, that the threatening,

in my opinion, does not necessarily mean that he should actually die on that identical solar day whereon he sinned, but that he should become mortal the day he became a sinner; that from that time he should be dead in law, or under sentence of death. As to the expression בַּיּוֹם *in the day*, we may see with what latitude it is used, Ezek. xxxiii. 12. "The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him בַּיּוֹם *in the day* of his transgression—neither shall the righteous be able to live בַּיּוֹם *in the day* that he sinneth;" and yet we know that the Lord did not always execute speedy vengeance, but bore long with rebellious Israel, and was even then exercising long-suffering, and warning the wicked to turn from his evil way.

But though the second death be not threatened upon Adam's one offence, nor *immediately* connected with it as its penalty; yet it has a connection therewith through the *medium* of men's personal guilt; for by that one offence sin not only entered into the world, but continues in it in the hearts and lives of his offspring, bringing forth fruit unto everlasting death; for the *wages* of personal sin is death in the highest sense, the opposite of which is the *free gift* of God, even eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. I cannot therefore see any material error in the popular way of stating this doctrine, seeing Adam hath brought all his posterity into a sinful and depraved state, which, without the salvation by Christ, would have issued in eternal death; and this will infallibly be the case with all who do not partake of that salvation. I have avoided any difference from the common opinion, on this point, in my public teaching; because I think there is more danger in raising curious speculations and distinctions among the brethren upon it, than in taking it wholly

in the old way. Another reason is, because I am aware of some objections to this view which I cannot satisfactorily answer. In the mean time I submit the above hints to your consideration, and expect your faithful animadversions. Praying that you and I may know more and more of Jesus Christ and him crucified as the foundation of all our hope and glorying, that we may be more and more conformed to him, and out of love to his name, feed the flock committed to our charge with wholesome and sound doctrine, even (το λογικον αδολον γαλα) the rational undeceitful milk, that they may grow thereby.

I am, Dear Brother,

Yours most cordially in the truth,

A. M.

*Edinburgh,*  
*August 25, 1779.*



ON  
**SABELLIANISM.**

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DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED your letter giving your view of the two points whereof I wrote you; I also read your letter to the whole church, and send you the following lines both as my own mind and theirs.

With regard to the doctrine of *reconciliation*, your manner of expressing it is no new thing to me, it being my view of that matter ever since I knew any thing about it. It would be absurd to suppose, that the death of Christ, which is an *effect* of God's love, should be the *procuring cause* of it; and it would be no less than blasphemy to imagine, that any thing similar to the wicked enmity of a sinner's heart ever took place in the mind of God. In this then we are agreed. I wish I could say so upon the other point I do not intend to enter into much argumentation upon the subject, both because I have little hope of its answering any good end, and also because I am sensible how ready I am to darken counsel with words without knowledge, upon so high and adorable a mystery; for what am I, a poor blind worm of the dust, who am but of yesterday and know nothing, that I should pretend to search out the Almighty unto perfection either in his essence, manner of existence, or ways, when I cannot so much as investigate thoroughly even the smallest part of his works which falls under the examination of my senses? I know nothing of the doctrine of Father, Word, and Spirit but by re-

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velation. I believe what this revelation plainly declares *to be*, though I do not understand the *manner* of its being. I hold therefore the doctrine of the Three divine Witnesses which are One, that adorable name into which we are baptized, to be a matter of pure faith, and not of investigation by human reason, it being far above our comprehension; but as the general doctrine is clearly revealed, it is reasonable to believe it, because God hath said it. We do not understand how God shall raise the dead, after the body is entirely consumed, or perhaps converted into the bodies of other animals; far less can we investigate how God created the world out of nothing; for it appears a plain contradiction to suppose that *something* should be brought out of *nothing*. These things we must take simply upon God's word; or fall immediately into infidelity. Revelation tells us that God is infinite and eternal; but do we know what *infinity* and *eternity* are? All we can say is, that the first is to be without bounds or limits, and the last without beginning or end of duration; but this is saying nothing to the point; it is only telling what *they are not*, but not what *they are*. The truth is, we can have no positive conceptions either of the one or the other; all our notions of *eternity* take their rise from the succession of time, and of *infinity* from magnitude or space, neither of which have any relation to these divine perfections. That adorable and incomprehensible Being then, who inhabiteth eternity and fills immensity, must exist in a *manner* of which we can have no conception; yet we must firmly believe that he is both eternal and infinite; though we can neither positively describe or even comprehend what these words mean, or what it is thus to exist. Revelation also declares that there is but

*one God* ; but it also sets forth this one God by all the ways of speaking by which we distinguish *three persons* among men. Reason at first sight pronounces this absurd and contradictory, and when we inquire into the bottom of this contradiction it will be found to land in this, that no such thing is to be found among the creatures, and that one human soul cannot subsist in three distinct persons ; but reason takes too much upon her when she argues from the creature to God, when she lays the line of finite to infinity, and pronounces that a contradiction in God which she cannot comprehend, or because he hath not thought fit to give an image of such an existence amongst his creatures. This is to say, that reason can comprehend every possible manner of existence even of the Author of existence himself. Having premised this I proceed to state what I understand to be your view of this point.

You say, “ That the three names Father, Son, (or Word) and Holy Ghost, are not expressive of *three distinct subsistences* in the same Godhead ; but of the *one undivided* Godhead dwelling bodily in the man Christ Jesus—and thus acts in all the characters, relations and offices implied in these and in every other appellation which he condescends to bear for our complete salvation and consolation.—Among men it is found allowable, yea amiable, for one man to sustain several and distinct characters, and fulfil the offices peculiar to each ; why should it appear unbecoming him to whom all perfections belong to do so, seeing in each character he bears he is the Almighty Jehovah, besides whom there is none else ? ”

I have quoted these clauses as most directly expressive of your view, and I think it amounts to this,

“That Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not three divine *subsistences*, but only three *characters* or *manifestations* under which the One God fulfils all the offices necessary for our salvation.” Which seems to me to be much the same with what Sabellius maintained about the year 256, and which, with very little variation, had been broached by Noetus a few years before. But as you adduce three classes of Scripture texts in support of this view, I shall first advert to each of them, to shew that according to the genuine sense of language these three names, Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, must imply more than you admit.

1. You quote a number of Scriptures to prove that there is but one living and true God, such as Mark xii. 29—32. 1 Cor. viii. 4—7. Gal. iii. 20. 1 Tim. ii. 5. Eph. iv. 6.—and speaking of the witness of the Three which bear record in heaven, you wish me to observe that it is the witness of *God*, not *Gods*. The *unity* of the Godhead or Divine Nature, is what we have all along professed to believe; and I charitably hope that you yourselves believed that fundamental article of all true religion, even before you gave up with the Trinity. In this then we are agreed. But I wish you would observe in your turn, that the most of these scriptures which you adduce for the *unity* of the Godhead, shew also a *plurality* in that one Godhead; for instance; Mark xii. 29. is taken from Deut. vi. 4. “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our *Elohim* is one Jehovah.” That *Elohim* is plural none can deny, and when it is applied to angels, rulers or idols, it is always translated *gods*. And indeed unless *Elohim* were plural, this text would have no apparent sense; for why should Israel be told that the Lord their God was *one* Lord, if there was nothing in the name that might be



construed into more? It would be only telling them that *One is One*; but as the *Elohim* of Israel was plural, it was necessary to shew them that their *plural Elohim* was but *one Jehovah*. Moses informs us that it was this plural *Elohim* that made the world, Gen. i. throughout, and the apostle gives us two of the distinctions in this creating *Elohim* in your second text, "But to us there is but one God the *Father*, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one *Lord Jesus Christ*, by whom are all things and we by him." 1 Cor. viii. 6. with which you may compare John i. 1—4. Heb. i. 2. and particularly Eph. iii. 9.—As for 1 Tim. ii. 5. it holds forth not only *one God*, but also *one mediator* between this God and men, which mediator I hope you will not deny is both God and man.

2. Concerning the *Son or Word*, you cite Gal. iv. 4. Luke i. 31—36. Rom. i. 3. Acts ii. 22, 30, 38. ch. iii. 13. ch. iv. 10, 26. ch. x. 36, 38.—Upon looking over these texts I find they contain an account of Christ's incarnation, mission, unction, death, resurrection and glorification; and though it may be allowed they shew in what sense he is God's *begotten Son*; yet they do not fully set forth in what view he is the *Word*; for they do not speak of his existence as the Word before his incarnation, but only as the *Word made flesh*: and if this be all your view of him as the Word, it falls far short of what the scripture reveals of him under that distinguishing character. Under this head you should have quoted John i. 1—3. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning *with* God. All things were made by him," &c. and ch. xvii. 5. "Father glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory *I had with thee before the world was*." The apostle shews, that the *Him* in whom it pleased the

*Father* that all fulness should dwell, “was *before all things*, and by him all things consist,” Col. i. 17, 19. And shewing the original glory and dignity of his person before he took upon him the form of a servant, or was made in the likeness of men, he says, “Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” Phil. ii. 6. Of that very person that should spring of the tribe of Judah, and be born in Bethlehem Ephratah, it is declared, that his goings forth have been of “old from the days of eternity,” Micah v. 2. that he is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” Heb. xiii. 8. “the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,” Rev. i. 8. Thus we see he is the eternal Word, and distinguished from the Father before the world was; but of this more afterwards.

3. Your next class of citations is to shew that *He and the Father are one*, for which you adduce John x. 30. ch. xiv. 8—12. Col. ii. 9. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Heb. i. John i. 1—9. 1 John v. 20, 21. John. viii 16—30. These texts do indeed shew that the Son or Word is one God with the Father, *i. e.* possesses the very same divine nature or essence with him; for it is impossible there should be more than one Godhead; but I am surprised you did not observe, that these same texts point him out as *another* than the *Father* in the *One* Godhead. Thus, John x. 30 “*I and my Father*”—here is the *distinction* which we call *personal* among men—“are one”—here is the *unity* of nature, these two being the one God.—John. xiv. 9. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,” does not mean that he was the Father, but that the Father was manifested in him as his *express image*, Col. i. 15. Heb. i. 3. and also by his *works and doctrine*, see John i. 18. ch. xvii. 6, 26.

The same expression occurs, ch. xii. 45. "He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me"—here is such a distinction as is betwixt the *sender* and the *sent*; yet in regard of manifestation the sender was seen in the sent. The same manner of speaking he uses with regard to himself and his disciples, Matth. x, 40. "He that receiveth you receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me;" yet neither were his *disciples* personally *himself*, nor *he* the *Father* that sent him.—Col. ii. 9. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bolily," *i. e.* fulness of divine perfections, for he possesses the same divine nature with the Father; and also fulness of grace and truth for his church, whereby they are "filled with all the fulness of God," Eph. iii. 19. Thus "it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" Col. i. 19. but here the *Father* whom it pleased, and the *Him* in whom it dwells, are again distinguished.—1 Tim. iii. 16. "God was manifest in the flesh." This shews he is God equal with the Father, but distinguished from him as incarnate, which the Father never was; for it was God *the Word that was made flesh*, and thus was sent forth from the *Father* as his *Son*; and this distinction appears clear from Heb. ii. where the *He* who took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, speaks to his Father as one distinct from him, "*I* will declare *thy* name," &c.—"Behold *I*, and the children which God hath given me," ver. 12, 17. In like manner he says, "A body hast thou prepared me," ch. x. 5. where the *me* who assumed the human nature, distinguishes himself from the *thou* who prepared it.—Heb. i. sets forth both the personal and official dignity of Christ above all God's former messengers, whether prophets or angels; but through the whole he is also

distinguished from the Father—as a *Son* is from a *Father*—as an *heir* is from *him* that appointed him, ver. 2.—as the *express image* is from the *person* whose image he is, ver. 3. and as *he that is spoken to* is distinguished from *him that speaketh to him*, see ver. 5, 8, 9, 13.—John i. 1—9. plainly affirms, that *the Word was God*, ver. 1. and that *all things were made by him*, ver. 3. but here also the Word is distinguished from God the Father, as being (*προς*) *with* God, ver. 1. as being in the beginning (*προς*) *with* God, ver. 2. upon which permit me to make the following plain remarks.

—1. That the *beginning* here does not signify the beginning of the gospel (as the Socinians affirm) but before the creation of any thing; for the creation of all things follows after in ver. 3. in which *all things* are included the angels, Col. i. 16. and as all things were created by the Word, he must have been *with* God before any creature existed, or as he himself says *before the world was*, John xvii. 5.—2. There is here a distinction in the Godhead plainly intimated; *in the Godhead*, I say; for the Word was God, and *he with whom* the Word was is God; and as there was no creature angelic or human as yet existing, this distinction must be in the Deity. Yet this distinction cannot be a plurality of Gods, for there is but one God; nor was this a distinction of *manifestation* (as you say) for how could there be any manifestation of God before there were any created to manifest himself to? It is essential to a manifestation to be seen, and when there is no discovery made, nor any to get a discovery, there can be no manifestation,—nor was it a distinction of *character*; for neither *character* nor *manifestation* will make sense if you substitute them in place of the *Word*. But it is such a distinction as the Holy



Ghost expresses to us in the language we use when we speak of two persons, and say the one was *with* the other; and how would it sound to say the Deity *was with himself*, or a character was with him.—3. God with whom the Word was, does not signify the Divine Nature, as such; for if the Word was (*προς*) *with* the Godhead, it would imply that he was not possessed of it himself; but it is affirmed that the *Word* himself *was God*; therefore he with whom the word was, must be *another subsistence* in the one Godhead, and this other subsistence is declared by the incarnate Word himself (and doubtless he knew best) to be he who in the New Testament is called *the Father*: “*Father glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was,*” John xvii. 5.—With respect to 1 John v. 20, 21. it proves that Jesus Christ is the true God in opposition to all idols, and the same God with the Father; but then it also points out a distinction in that one Godhead, by the words *him* and *his Son*, “we are in *Him* that is true, in *his Son* Jesus Christ;” and if we look to ver. 7. we shall find that distinction set forth under the notion of *three distinct Witnesses*, emitting (not a *successive*, as you imagine, but) a *joint* testimony, whilst it is also affirmed, that *these Three are One*, for it is the witness of the *One God* subsisting in the *Three Witnesses*, ver. 9. And when, at your desire, I compare this with John viii. 16—30. I see the same distinction kept up in the clearest *personal terms* imaginable, “*I and the Father that sent me,*” ver. 16. “*I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness also,*” ver. 18. “*Ye neither know me nor my Father,*” ver. 19. &c. As to the Holy Ghost, his distinction from the Father

and Son is also clearly spoken of,—he was one of the Elohim that created the world, Gen. i. 2.—he revealed the gospel before hand to the prophets, 2 Pet. i. 21.—descended on Jesus at his baptism, Matth. iii. 16. and furnished him for his work, Luke iv. 18. John iii. 34. Acts x. 38.—he was *sent forth by* the Son *from* the Father upon the apostles, John xv. 26.—his office was not to speak of himself, but what he should hear, and guide the disciples into all truth, John xvi. 13, 14.—and he is mentioned as a distinct witness from the Father and Word, in 1 John v. 7.

Thus I have just touched on the different texts you have quoted on this subject, and have confined myself to the simple and obvious meaning of the very words. If I am wrong, it must be in understanding them too literally; but if I depart from their literal sense, I am afraid that it would lead me into the deserts of scepticism and uncertainty, not only with respect to this point, but the whole of revelation. In the whole of these texts there is a *distinction* pointed out as well as an *unity*, and this distinction is held forth by all the modes of speech by which we distinguish persons among men. Each of them speaks of himself in the first person, *I, me, my, mine, us, we*, &c.—They speak to one another reciprocally, *thou, thee, thy, thine*, &c. They speak of one another, *he, his, him*, &c.—and they are all spoken of in distinct form, and in relation to one another, as being *with* one another, *sending* and *sent*, and doing distinct things peculiar to each. I take the revelation of this high mystery then just as it is simply expressed.

It is possible that you may start an objection to the following effect, “God in using this personal manner of speaking is only accommodating himself to *human*

*conceptions*, even as when he ascribes *bodily parts* to himself, and so must not be understood literally." To this I answer, that I am a *human* creature ; so can have nothing but *human conceptions*, and if the Lord has accommodated his revelation to my conceptions, I ought to receive it thankfully, and conform my ideas to his revelation, as a little child, assured that it is the only revelation he intends me in this world, the most proper for me in my present state, the most worthy of him to bestow, and that he can have no intention to deceive or mislead me. If he speaks to me in a language suited to men, shall I strain after being wise as God ? Gen. iii. 5, 6. Shall I reject the idea which he thought most proper for human creatures to entertain of him, and seek to be wise above what is written by intruding into things which I have not seen ?—As to *hand, eyes, ears, &c.* being ascribed unto God, I shall only notice, that as we are fully ascertained from the whole Bible, that God is an invisible, pure spiritual Being, these expressions cannot signify *bodily parts* in him, nor does the scripture any where say so ; but shall we affirm, that because they do not signify any thing *corporeal* in him as they do in us, that therefore they signify nothing *in him* at all ? do they not point out some acts or perfections of the divine nature whereunto the use of these members in us bears some faint and imperfect analogy ? Even so, the scripture reveals three subsistences in the divine nature by all the modes of speech in which we speak of three persons among men, and though we must not measure these three by any created subsistences, angelic or human, (more than the divine *omniscience* by *bodily eyes and ears*) yet, if words can have any meaning, we must believe the reality of them.

Still, however, you may possibly inquire "What is it that constitutes distinct subsistences in the God-head? or what lies at the bottom of such a distinction?" I reply, God forbid that I should ever attempt to resolve such a question! I do not know what constitutes distinct persons among men. All I know is how they *appear* to be distinct. I am as conscious that I am my very individual *self*, and not another, as I am of my existence; but what constitutes this *self*, I cannot tell. I do not so much as know what constitutes the difference of colours, yet I am not the less certain that there is a difference, because I see it with my eyes. Shall I then attempt to describe what constitutes the distinction of the adorable and incomprehensible Divine Three? Far be it! It is enough for me that they are declared to be Three, Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, and that these Three are One Jehovah. Let me therefore believe and adore.

I am, yours, &c.

A. M.

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### ON THE LOSS OF RELATIVES.

[To Mrs. Stevenson, of Hull.]

DEAR MADAM,

*Edinburgh, Dec. 15, 1799.*

BY a line from Mr. S. I am informed that you have met with an afflicting dispensation of Providence, in the loss of your youngest child, by the small-pox. You will, no doubt, feel this the more sensibly, from its being, I suppose, the first affliction of the kind you have experienced, and from the natural tenderness of a mother's affections and feelings. Insensibility, under the hand of God, would be *criminal*, and, in such a case as this, *unnatural*. He hath implanted in us natural affections, and when he deprives us of the ob-



jects of them, he wills that we should feel. True, indeed, these objects are his gifts, every thing amiable in them is from him, and he has an undoubted right to recall them at pleasure ; yet

“ The God of love will sure indulge  
The flowing tear, the heaving sigh,  
When tender friends and kindred die.”

But as, on the one hand, we are not to despise the chastening of the Lord through a stoical or callous insensibility ; so neither ought we, on the other hand, to faint, when rebuked of him, so as to be overset and sink under the trial. As both these extremes are sinful, as well as hurtful to ourselves, so we may be sure that neither of them corresponds with the designs of a gracious and merciful God in afflicting us.

I might suggest to you, upon this occasion, that all our worldly comforts and enjoyments are from God, and lent us but for a season—that we are unworthy of the least of his favours—that he has a sovereign right to recall them, when he sees meet—that affliction is the common lot of mankind—that death will undoubtedly, sooner or later, close this transitory scene, with respect to us all—and that impatience, or excessive grief, is sinful, unreasonable, unavailing, and only increases our distress. But though such reflections are just and proper, they are not sufficient, of themselves, to give relief to the mind smarting under affliction. Religion, the Christian religion alone, is calculated to assuage our grief in every trial, and to make us not only submissive and resigned, but even cheerfully to acquiesce in the divine disposals. It assures us that none of our afflictions come by *chance*, but by the *special* appointment of our heavenly Father—that they are under his direction and special management, as to their nature, degree, continuance and effects—that he is possessed of infinite wisdom,

and knows what is best for us ; and also of infinite goodness, whereby he makes all things, even the sharpest afflictions, to work together for good, to them that love him. His chastisements are the effects of his love to his people, and he therein acts the part of a tender-hearted Father ; “ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” And though “ no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, yet afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.”

Had God intended no other happiness for his people, no other portion but the transitory enjoyments of this life, we could not indeed perceive his love in depriving us of these ; but when we consider that God proposes himself as the object of our happiness, who is a satisfying and everlasting portion, and whose favour is better than life ; when we think of this world only as a passage to an eternal state of happiness, in the presence and enjoyment of God, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore ; and when we think of the Son of God coming into the world, bleeding and dying, and rising again from the dead, to procure for us the remission of sins, and eternal life with himself beyond death and the grave : this will lead us to consider afflictions as but light and momentary, when compared with the glory that shall be revealed, and the faith and hope of this will support us under every trial. It is only in this view that we can perceive chastisements to be effects of divine love, and subservient to our true and everlasting interest. They serve, when sanctified, to humble our minds—teach us submission to, and acquiescence in, the will of God—remind us, that we owe all our comforts to, and hold them immediately of, God—discover to us the

transitory nature of all earthly enjoyments, and the folly of setting our supreme affections upon them, or of placing our happiness in them—convince us, that our true and permanent happiness lies *only* in the enjoyment of God—make us relish the comforts of the gospel, which are suited to a state of affliction in this world—and tend to lead our views and desires forward to that state, where sin and sorrow shall never enter. These, and such like effects, are what God intends by afflicting us, as he has declared in his word. Are they not all conducive to our chief good? and ought it not to be our main care, that these gracious designs of God may be gained upon us by all his chastisements? In proportion as these effects are produced, a sweet and placid serenity overspreads the soul; it recurs to God himself as its chief happiness, and finds rest in him as its portion and satisfying good. How blessed in such a case is the man whom the Lord chasteneth!

When our minds are overcome with an affecting loss, we are apt to forget our remaining mercies. But are there not always great grounds for thankfulness amidst all our sorrow? Has God taken from us one dear child, and has he not left us another? Nay, has he not left us a husband or wife, the affectionate partners of our joys and griefs? And though he had bereft us of all at once, does not he himself stand instead of all relations? and is he not infinitely better than sons or daughters?—We ought therefore to reflect upon the grounds of gratitude and thankfulness he affords us, amidst all our afflictions.

You have reason, dear Madam, to believe that your child is happy. The scripture gives us a favourable view of the state of all infants dying in infancy. Our Lord says, “Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of



God." A great part of mankind die in infancy before they have done any good or evil; and our Lord declares, that of such little children the kingdom of God is made up; and, as a token of this, he took the little children that were brought him up in his arms, and blessed them, Mark x. They die, by virtue of their connection with Adam in his first transgression; but having done neither good nor evil, in their own persons, they will not be judged according to the deeds done in the body, nor fall under the sentence of the second death, which is pronounced *only* upon personal wicked deeds; but being redeemed by the blood of Christ, and written in the Lamb's book of life, they shall be raised up from the first death, which came by Adam, to the enjoyment of eternal life in the heavenly kingdom. This consideration should dry up your tears. Your child is now with God, infinitely more happy than you could have made her on earth; infinitely more happy than you can conceive; and, if you are a follower of them, who, by faith and patience inherit the promises, and of Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of faith, you shall one day meet with her amidst the redeemed company, where you shall never more part; and, where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away," Rev. xxi. 4. That this may be the happy issue of all our present afflictions, is the sincere prayer of,

Dear Madam,

Your sincere and sympathizing Friend,

A. M.

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